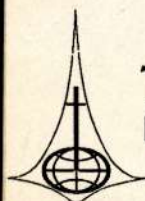


THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN A MULTIFAITH SOCIETY

REPORT

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
JULY 1994



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

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Theological Education and Training in a Multifaith Society

**Papers and report
of
a consultation held July 15-19, 1994
in Johannesburg, South Africa**

Lutheran World Federation

Dept. for Theology & Studies

Dept. for Mission & Development

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Preface

The need for a contextual perspective in ministerial formation has been a recognized concern for a long time, which has been reflected in the implementation of more scholarships for theological studies in the continents of Latin America, Africa and Asia. Institutions for theological education in the South through various efforts were strengthened and have reached a level of quality and high standards, increasing the number of students registered for basic degrees as well as research.

The multifaith society of today demands a reflection not only on the contextual perspective but also on the significance of people of other faiths as part of a reality for which to prepare students. This concern was raised by representatives from member churches as well as by theological educators.

A Consultation on Theological Education and Training in a Multifaith Society was therefore planned for 1994, and jointly organized by the DMD/Office for Human Resources Development and the DTS/Office for Church and People of Other Faiths.

The consultation took place at Kempton Park Conference Center, Bonaero Park 1622, South Africa from Friday July 15 to Tuesday July 19, 1994.

The consultation aimed at encouraging the member churches to enter into a process of continuous reflection on the content of a more comprehensive theological education and training to meet the challenges and needs in a changing pluralistic, multifaith and multicultural society and to develop a method of increased sharing of experiences and exchange for a relevant theological education.

The goals to be attained were

- To learn through information sharing about various aspects of the relevance of today's theological education.
- To start a process of identifying joint concerns and needs of more comprehensive theological education and training.
- To reflect on the significance of people of other faiths as part of a reality for which to prepare students in theological institutions.
- To give orientation about LWF programs related to Human Resources Development and Church and Other Faiths and find ways for the implementation to accord with the needs identified during the consultation.
- To identify the needs for exchange between theological institutions in different continents.

- To establish a data bank of facilities and training possibilities in the South regarding theological education.
- To explore possibilities of sharing of resources.

The working methods included plenary sessions with lectures as well as working groups.

The participants were Lutheran theological educators from Latin America, Africa and Asia, either principals or deans, and some consultants to the conference came from other continents (Europe and North America).

The staff of the Office for Human Resources Development and the Office for Church and People of Other Faiths planned the content of the consultation which was sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation's Department for Mission and Development and Department for Theology and Studies, hosted by ELCSA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa) and coordinated by LUCSA (Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa), the regional umbrella organization.

The organizers would like to thank the contributors, the participants, the representatives from ELCSA and LUCSA and, not least, the Kempton Park Conference Centre for making this consultation a meaningful event and turning it into a success.

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Welcome

Iwish to welcome you on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation. I want to thank the member churches for making the conference facilities available to us and to the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa for coordinating this event.

Two years ago none of us here would have thought a meeting of this nature to be possible in South Africa. The new South Africa is not only a demonstration that God can answer prayers, but it also gives evidence in which way the interfaith dialogue has contributed towards peace and reconciliation. The Christian communities stood side by side with Muslims, Hindus, Jews and those of African traditional religions in their struggle to overcome apartheid. At the inauguration ceremony for President Nelson Mandela, leaders representing the above-mentioned religious communities offered their prayers for peace with justice and reconciliation.

This has reminded me that the theological seminary education for ministerial formation in Southern Africa lacks teaching about how Christians live and how they share their space with people of other religious traditions. For reasons which I can never fully understand, the presence of other faiths is totally missing from some of the Christian education material and the programs used in primary and secondary schools in this region. A study of confirmation material of most Christian denominations reflects the same lack of awareness. Holding this consultation in a region marked by such dramatic political changes is in my view an opportunity to challenge theological educators and others to consider seriously the need to review their syllabi. They should be encouraged to establish professional chairs for interfaith dialogue, to provide scholarship awards for students pursuing studies in this field, to encourage exchange programs for both professors and students internationally and nationally, and to provide financial resources for seminars where students and pastors encounter each other. These dialogues and programs must be seen in the context of promoting peace among communities and nations of the world as well as respect for the integrity of other religious traditions.

Once more, welcome to this consultation. My best wishes accompany you as you return to your respective places of work.

Shalom.

*Ishmael Noko
General Secretary elect
The Lutheran World Federation*

July 1994

Theological Education and Training in Response to the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

by Ambrose Moyo

Introduction

Religious pluralism is one of the most formidable challenges to theological education and ministerial training in Africa today. Other challenges come from its very unstable social, economic and political systems. To be relevant and meaningful, the church must always look for effective ways of responding to these challenges as they manifest themselves differently in each context. Theological education, therefore, cannot but recognize the plural character of its context and its many varied challenges as it seeks to prepare men and women for ministries that will be able to face these challenges without fear. It is the duty of the theological institution to equip those men and women who feel called to the Christian ministry for service in which they must relate to situations calling for broad knowledge of their societies and, in particular, their multifaith character. Theological education curricula in Africa can only ignore the existence of other religious traditions at their own peril and that of the Christian ministry.

The intention of this paper is to share experience gained from the author's participation in a project which had involved the University of Zimbabwe, the University of Utrecht in Holland, and the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education. Its aim was to develop teaching materials that would make it possible to teach African Traditional Religions (ATR) within multifaith Religious and Moral Education syllabi in Zimbabwean secondary schools. As a result, three resource books for teachers were published.¹ This paper is going to reflect on how theological education and ministerial training—with special reference to Zimbabwe—can benefit from a multifaith approach which attempts to produce a ministry that can respond effectively to the challenges of religious pluralism in the Zimbabwean societies.

By adopting the multifaith approach to religious education in Zimbabwe, some steps have been taken towards developing a method for creating an awareness of the religious pluralism existing in our societies. Needless to say, religious education is different from theological education and should therefore have different methodologies. However, both of them need multifaith approaches to be effective in building communities characterized by mutual respect and which recognize the religious differences within

¹Gerrie ter Haar, *Faith of our Fathers: Studies in Religious Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit, 1990; S.J. Nondo (ed.), *Multifaith Issues and Approaches in Religious Education with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*, Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit, 1991; G. ter Haar, A. Moyo, and S.J. Nondo (eds.), *African Traditional Religions in Religious Education: A Resource Book with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*. Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit, 1992.

them. It will be helpful for theological educators in Zimbabwe to enquire whether the multifaith approach to religious education used in Zimbabwe does offer a model that theological institutions can use in designing curricula for theological education and training. To know how the multifaith approach or how multifaith issues are being dealt with in the Religious Education curriculum in Zimbabwean schools can only enhance Theological Education and the practice of the Christian ministry.

Theological education and ministerial training equip women and men for a ministry that not only recognizes other religious traditions within society but also demands, with all the risks involved, that they be done in dialogue with them. Religious education in public institutions creates an awareness of religious pluralism. It is important that pastors not lag behind in their knowledge of other religious traditions so that they may continue to guide their parishioners who are grappling with multifaith issues in their societies. Theological education when done in dialogue with other religious traditions can only result in an understanding of mission that recognizes the validity of other religions in the universal quest for salvation.

The Challenges from Religious Pluralism in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a secular state. Its constitution affirms religious freedom for all its people, the majority of which are Christians. Our colonial and missionary history favored the spread of Christianity and was in fact hostile to ATRs. Consequently, even after Independence, Christianity has remained the dominant religion and is in a way the state religion, though not officially recognized as such. This is very evident when there are state functions such as state funerals and Independence anniversaries.

However, there are also other religious traditions that have an impact on Zimbabwean society. ATRs are some of them. These continue to be very much alive, and are practiced by both the traditionalists and many African Christians. Most challenging is the role of ancestors and how they should be perceived within African Christianity. Many African Christians participate in the traditional religious ceremonies relating to the deceased such as *kurova giva/kugadzira mudzimu/umbuyiso* without a guilty conscience. How can theological education address this question from the perspectives of New Testament studies, Old Testament studies, systematic theology, church history, pastoral care and counseling, etc.? The African traditionalists find their religious beliefs very satisfying, meaningful and relevant. Many African Christians who have embraced Christianity do not seem to find complete satisfaction in their newly found faith, hence they continue to practice the traditional religions in one way or another. Nocturnal visits to the *nganga/isangoma* are quite common. Belief in witchcraft is rife. The Karanga people of Zimbabwe's fear of *Ngozi* (avenging spirit) and the traditional methods of escaping the power of harmful spirits have persisted to this day. These are but a few aspects of traditional religions that are a challenge to Christianity, and to theological education and ministerial training in Africa. Children of Christian parents

grow up in such environments, and ministerial training must prepare its candidates for an effective ministry in such contexts.

Islam is another religion to reckon with in Zimbabwe. Although not as threatening to Christianity as in other African countries (as for instance in Nigeria and in East Africa), Muslims are gradually turning into a very vocal and aggressive minority. The churches are becoming much concerned about the many mosques cropping up all over the country like mushrooms. Large sums are being poured into Zimbabwe to provide scholarships for highschool dropouts who are then sent to study in Muslim countries such as Iran. The high unemployment rate makes this very attractive for an increasing number of, especially, street kids. In addition to this, the Muslim communities in Zimbabwe are establishing many nursery and pre-schools where parents, including Christian parents, send their children without paying any fees. A great deal of indoctrination takes place in these schools, in that way ensuring that the future generation will have a significantly increased Muslim population.

There are also other religious traditions being practiced in Zimbabwe, though by tiny minority groups only. Hinduism is one of them and cannot be ignored when looking at the religious scene in Zimbabwe. Christians interact with these groups in everyday business encounters. Judaism is another such group. It was in recognition of this religious pluralism that in Zimbabwe the need for a new approach to Religious Education was felt and it made policy decisions necessary at the highest levels of government. The implementation of the policy, particularly in a nation that is approximately sixty percent Christian, is particularly interesting. How has this policy been received by both the Religious Education Unit of the Ministry of Education, the teachers and the parents? Religious pluralism also calls for a new approach to theological education and ministerial training by both the churches and the theological institutions. What is taking place then in the area of religious education? Has that approach been fully accepted? The syllabi will tell the story.

The Multifaith Approach to Religious Education

The multifaith approach was a deliberate effort of the government to address the religious pluralism of the people. The Ministry of Education and Culture adopted this approach to Religious Education after Independence in 1980, when it recognized the plural character of Zimbabwean society. Before that, religious education was nothing else but Christian Education, called Bible or Scripture Knowledge. In fact, Christianity was enjoying a monopoly in the classroom.

The aim of the new approach, as stated by the government, is "to provide firm moral principles on which to build the nation." These "moral principles" are to be drawn from the different religious practices. The Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) Religious

and Moral Education Syllabus,² further explains that the approach is intended to offer opportunities for the students to, inter alia:

- (a) understand themselves, their hopes, desires and struggles in the light of the faith in God;
- (b) respect people whose beliefs differ from their own, hence developing a spirit of tolerance and cooperation among various religious groups.

With these broad aims, one would hope to see syllabi reflective of the religiously plural character of our society. A glance at the primary school syllabi shows that the emphasis is still on Christianity as being Zimbabwe's religion.

The curriculum is built around what is termed "life themes" and intends to look at these from different angles. The syllabus for grades 3 - 7 is designed around objectives to be reached by way of a spiraling ascent, each subject being encountered each year, and culminating in a more thematic approach in grade 7. However, a close examination of the implementation of these objectives reveals that the multifaith aspect is not taken seriously, as most of the examples are taken from biblical materials. Consider for example objective three³ which is stated as follows: "To help the child discover that Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever, and that He is alive and speaks to the people of Africa through their social, cultural and religious backgrounds."

The expressed emphasis in the syllabus is on: "Jesus is the same; Jesus is alive; Jesus speaks to the people of Africa."⁴

The syllabus is then elaborated as follows:

Grade 3: *The main emphasis: Jesus speaks to the people of Africa with special reference to the family.*

- (a) *Awareness of the family of God through:*
 - (i) *The church in all ages and over the world with Jesus as head;*
 - (ii) *Family problems—Joseph and his family*
 - (iii) *The traditional extended family and the family of God*
 - (iv) *Those who join the family—a study of Ruth*
- (b) *Awareness of God as concerned with people through:*

² Cf. *Religious and Moral Education Syllabus: Zimbabwe Junior Certificate*, Ministry of Education CDU: 1988, p. 2.

³ Cf. *Primary School Religious and Moral Education Syllabus, Grades 3-7*, Ministry of Education: CDU, p. 6.

⁴*Ibid.*

- (i) *Stories of Jesus as a friend—Mary and Martha, Zacchaeus.*
- (ii) *Conclusion that Jesus is a friend of all children everywhere—he said, "Let the children come to me."*

The story of Jesus as a refugee in Egypt (Africa).

At this level, very little is obviously included in the syllabus about the African family, which is the environment that the student at this stage is very much familiar with. The grade 6 syllabus has more of the African family, but the emphasis still continues to be on Jesus. The full syllabus is outlined as follows:

Grade 6: *Main emphasis: Jesus speaks to the people of Africa with special reference to religious experiences, cultural ceremonies and ethics in our country.*

- (a) *Awareness of God through life in Africa*
 - (i) *Betrothal ceremonies—Mary and Joseph*
 - (ii) *O.T. illustrations of (i) above—Jacob and Leah and Rachel; Ruth.*
- (b) *Awareness of God through consideration of traditional ideas of God.*
 - (i) *His remoteness—story of Paul at Athens*
 - (ii) *The nature and role of ancestral spirits and spirit mediums—the story of the rich man and Lazarus.*
- (iii) *Further biblical illustrations of life after death—the resurrection and after-death appearances of Jesus; Paul's and Stephen's visions; the transfiguration.*

In a paper entitled "The Rationale for Reviewing the Primary Religious and Moral Education Syllabus," Sister Dembetembe has drawn the attention of the ministry to the injustice that the current syllabus does to other religious traditions. In particular, she makes a passionate plea that ATRs should constitute a major part of the curriculum, because, in her words, "it provides a strong sense of identity for both the teacher and the pupil." She notes that in the materials so far being used there is very little said, if anything at all, on the social, cultural and religious backgrounds of the people of Africa. She, however, makes no plea for other traditions in Zimbabwe.

The main objective of the approach is to be able to teach religious and moral education to students of different religious traditions in one class. The syllabus as quoted above has a very strong Christian bias in its aims and objectives; hence the Advisory Board for Christian Education in Zimbabwe has had no difficulties to accept and to use it in mission schools. Muslim and Hindu children would be very uncomfortable with the syllabus. One would have expected some of the illustrations to have to do with the

Koran or the Hindu scriptures in order to inform the children that there are also other traditions than the Christian and the ATRs. Although in the ZJC syllabus the approach is more thematic, the biblical bias is even much stronger.

In defence of the syllabus it has, however, been argued that the religious environment in Zimbabwe is predominantly Christian, and that therefore less emphasis should be put on those traditions having very little or no following in the country. What is important in the new approach is to enable the child to develop an informed relationship with people of other faiths. What then does this mean for theological education and ministerial training?

Implications for Theological Education and Ministerial Training

Theological Education and the practice of the ministry do not take place in a vacuum. Faith is found within many particular contexts and influenced by many cultural factors. Most of our theological institutions have revised their curricula to include a course on world religions. This is reasonable, for it is important that church leaders be equipped to assist the members of their congregations to healthy neighborly relations with persons of other faiths. Religious education in schools imparts knowledge about other religions. Teachers are expected to refrain from displaying commitment to any specific religion, and therefore from indoctrinating pupils or evangelizing. However, in theological education and training the opposite is true. Lecturers and the students are or should be visibly committed to the Christian faith. However, this attitude must be coupled with an openness for listening and dialoguing with persons of other faiths.

Dialogue is "a necessary component of responsible witness: we must listen to others if we would be heard and we dare not demean the Gospel's message with unfair disparagement or willful distortion of other people's prayers and doctrine."⁵ Constructive dialogue with persons of other faiths, as Brown has argued, "is the duty of every Christian, and theological curricula cannot neglect the subject without severely crippling their overall effectiveness."⁶

Theological education can no longer pretend that Christianity is the only viable religion or the only tradition that offers a meaningful relationship with the Supreme Being. This was the view of the missionaries. The African people believed in and worshipped God long before the coming of the missionaries. The multifaith approach can be used as a viable tool, not only to impart knowledge about other religious traditions, but also to challenge the theological students and their attitude towards other faiths. By the time they leave college they should be ready not only to defend their faith but also to assist

⁵ Stuart E. Brown, "Interfaith Dialogue and Ministerial Formation," in J.S. Pobee and J.N. Kudadjie, *Theological Education in Africa: Quo Vadimus?* Accra: Asempa, WCC, 1990, p. 124.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

their parishioners to enter into a meaningful dialogue with their neighbors of other faiths.

In the multifaith approach, every theme is expected to be dealt with from the perspectives of different religious traditions. Theoretically this should be so; however, this is still not the case in Zimbabwe, despite the fifteen years of Independence. An application of the same approach to theological education would mean that the study of other religions should not be the business only of the one course on world religions or comparative religions/ phenomenology of religion. The study of other religions must be fully integrated into the theological curricula and not be relegated to the periphery of theological education and ministerial training. In other words, every theological discipline must be pursued in dialogue with other religious traditions. This can be facilitated by the thematic approach, making it possible to deal with the theme from several angles by using perspectives not only from the Christian discipline but also from other belief systems. Every lecturer and every course must participate in dialogue. The ideal situation would be to involve practitioners of other faiths as much as possible, at least as resource persons. This would allow for a more meaningful dialogue.

The approach supported in this paper ideally requires a theological education environment that is interreligious, interdisciplinary, and ecumenical. For ages theological education has been associated with centres of learning, universities for instance. The Lutheran Church was born in a university environment. Denominational seminaries must think seriously on how meaningfully to engage their students in encounters with persons of other religious traditions.

The point being made here is that theological education must "go beyond merely academic curiosity to a sympathetic awareness of essential doctrinal differences and a spiritual sensitivity to experiential convergences."⁷ Both theological student and lecturer must be exposed to other religious traditions through visits to religious centres such as mosques and Hindu temples. Through asking questions, listening to prayers, and observing the gestures of the practitioners themselves, participants would get a feel for the other person's religion. Theological institutions must consider going further even by opening their doors to those students of the other faiths who may be interested in Christian theology, thus making the challenge even more real. The theological lecturers, on the other hand, must also be knowledgeable about the teaching and practices of other religions as well as about the contents and methods used in the training of their religious leaders. In this regard, why not consider a sabbatical in a predominantly non-Christian environment or in a non-Christian religious institution? There are risks in this, but they are outweighed by the gains for theological education.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Conclusion

Brown has made the following very relevant observation:

African Christians today are called to live in harmony with communities who find in traditional religion not simply a new wellspring for a universal ecclesiology but a fully adequate belief system for the ordering of their lives. People called to love their neighbours cannot arrogantly assume that such traditionalist communities will eventually wither away any more than we triumphantly expect the disappearance of Judaism in our own age.⁸

The same can be said of other religious traditions. We cannot wish them away, we can only co-exist. A multifaith approach may be very demanding for both lecturer and student, but it is necessary if we are to make headway in creating harmonious societies and thus contribute to nation-building, especially in the young nations. Many colors make the world more beautiful. Taking other religious traditions seriously must result in adopting a dialogical approach towards mission, an approach in which individuals share their experiences of the divine; in the process they either enrich each other, or conversion in either direction may take place. This is the risk of a multifaith approach and of taking dialogue with persons of other faiths seriously.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Theological Education in Response to the Challenge of Religious Pluralism

by *Datuk Thu En Yu*

Introduction

We live in a world that suffers from many injuries. It is divided by concepts of race and religion. Everywhere, the church is still far from being competent in addressing these issues. While being contextual in their own right, many recently emerging theologies identify themselves in solidarity with a certain social group and adopt a confrontational approach to other groups. Seen in this light, they are prejudiced and biased in essence and complicate relations in the already volatile and polarized society. A Christian theology of reconciliation may possibly respond to the divisions of pluralism. It could encourage crosscultural responsibility for the common social, economic and political well-being.

This paper is an attempt to explore relationships of Christians and non-Christians in a pluralistic society.

Theology of mission with a strong emphasis on the community aspect is a starting point from which to break through traditional barriers. In their approach, Christians need a new attitude, a friendship imbued with goodwill and the spirit of tolerance and humility. It is a theology of "friendship" which corresponds to the Old Testament tradition of *shalom*. Theological education in a multifaith society has to be articulated from this perspective of "friendship." Doing this, we need to re-examine the Christian concepts of ecclesiology and missiology.

Polarization

Southeast Asia is a multireligious and multiracial society that enjoys harmony, though a very volatile and fragile one. In Malaysia, for example, Islam is the official religion and Malay the prevailing race. The constitution defines a Malay as someone who embraces Islam and practices Malay customs. No Malay can convert to another religion. Among the non-Malays—or non-Muslims—in this country, there are different reactions to each other. The Hindus say to the Christians: "Hands off! Don't bother people!" Likewise, the Chinese Buddhists to the others. Thus, religion and race are intertwined in this country.

Polarization is one of the major problems in Southeast Asia, not only dominating political life but the whole process of nation-building. In order that the society may become prosperous, it is vital to tackle the questions of national integration and

reconciliation. The creation of one people or of one neighborhood is a theological exercise. Theological education must therefore enrich the meaning of national integration and reconciliation, be able to identify the challenges of the world and, when that is done, to theologize contextually. Students can be trained to perform the role of a neighborly "agent of change," such as the one manifested by the biblical tradition.

Perspectives of Theological Education

Here are some suggestions on how theological education could be reviewed, renewed and used as a tool for dealing with the problems of religious pluralism.

A. Theology of Social Responsibility

Our Christian concepts of ecclesiology and missiology must be re-examined, and to do that we must ask the following questions:

1. Should we stick to our old priorities, policies and strategies? Are they still adequate in a pluralistic society such as South Africa, for example?
2. If they are not, what new ones do we need to formulate?

We need to adopt a new attitude and a new approach so that our mission and our church will remain holistic. In this attempt, we must inculcate the necessity of adopting also a responsible and receptive lifestyle.

In doing this, we are also rethinking the meaning of ecclesiology and missiology. In Greek, *ecclesia* means "an assembly of people with an objective." Peter Hodgson stated in his book, *Revisioning the Church*, that in Hellenistic Judaism, *ecclesia* was used to designate assemblies of both political and religious character. These assemblies gathered not only to praise God but also to regulate the affairs of the community. Hence, *ecclesia* is in essence a religious as well as a social community. The community aspect of *ecclesia* is highlighted.

In the Bible, *ecclesia* is the body of Christ, the people of the Lord, who are elected because of God's loving kindness. *Ecclesia* must therefore guide the ministry of love. Through this ministry, the essence of faith and hope are manifested, creating a genuinely ecclesial community which praises God and regulates the affairs of the community.

As a religious and social community, the church has a twofold responsibility. Firstly, it is a kerygmatic community; secondly, it is also a koinonia community.

As a kerygmatic community, the church preaches "... to bring good news to the poor. ... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the

oppressed go free" (Lk. 4:18). The church is for the community. The good news has to be preached to all people without prejudice and shared by all. Kerygma is always prophetic and liberating. In case of racial and religious polarization of society, the church's kerygma has to provide a new perspective for the process of national integration.

The church as a *koinonia* community has a sharing nature. Will the kerygmatic community show the way to a *koinonia* community? Will the church teach the people to share their resources?

Be it as it may, to become a genuine *koinonia* community, the church must be present among the people at the grassroots, understand their problems and seek righteousness for them. The ecclesial community has to identify with the poor, the oppressed and the discriminated. It is a community which springs from below, from the bottom, from the grassroots. It is a place for liberating human beings from every kind of oppression.

The mission of the church is religious as well as social. Church and society are not two separate and independent entities, they are indeed inseparable. The traditional concepts of the spiritual and the physical indicate a whole being, never two separate parts. The life of human beings cannot be split in two, nor can the life of society, which constitutes an inalienable part of human life. Any attempt, however innocent, to separate the sacred and the profane only diminishes the role of the church within the religious sphere and neglects its social function.

This is a world of hunger, unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities, corruption and exploitation. In a world lacking in equality and righteousness, God is not a God of apathy, he is a God of pathos who is active and who participates in human affairs. His kingdom needs the complement of the church by discharging the role of an ecclesial community.

The salvation that Jesus Christ preaches is a holistic gospel. The nature of salvation is more communal than individualistic. This aspect corresponds to the celebration of the Eucharist by the Jews. The Eucharist is a festival celebrated by Jews to mark their emancipation from political and economic bondage. In the Early Church, the believers partook of communion bread and dedicated themselves to alleviating poverty.

The Jewish Eucharist celebration has shed some light on the church's obligation for social concerns and nation-building. When there is religious and racial polarization, this not only dominates the political but the entire nation-building process, in economic, educational, social as well as cultural areas. The church needs a theology of Christian responsibility to identify and to share concerns which it has in common with Muslims and with other faiths. Understanding comes when Christians accept others and trust them as colleagues and equal partners.

The ecclesial community is the body of Christ. The identity of Christ is naturally the undisputed identity of the community. Thus, the church must follow the example of Christ and take the cross as its goal and the cloth as its hallmark.

If unjust institutions, forces, and prejudice are to go, the church must unselfishly make the sacrifice. James G. Emerson is right, when he says, "suffering work transforms a painful, hurtful, destructive situation into a process for health, well-being and wholeness."¹ In a time of misunderstandings, conflicts and damage in a country, the church must get rid of its self-acclaimed, egocentric image, and exchange an old ethos for a new one. The church needs a new attitude: it has to let go the old obsolete machinery so that new meanings may be discovered. The gift of sacrifice is to let go. This will then carry the whole community onto a new level of relationships.

Indeed, it is difficult to change the stereotypes of Christian attitudes, say Byron Haines and Frank Cooley again and again in their book, *Christians and Muslims Together*. They suggest that Christians in encounter with Muslims need "an attitude of openness to and humility before another, a willingness to hear and respect a point of view, and a desire to let other people be what they are, rather than attempting to make them like oneself as a precondition for friendship" (p. 113). One aspect of openness and humility is the ability to surrender and to let go. There is no faith, hope and love without suffering. We need a theology of suffering. The church has to model itself on the ecclesial community and practice the community concept that constantly upholds concrete solidarity with the people of other faiths.

How do we articulate theology where conversion is impossible and the theology of triumph and success is no longer suitable? A starting point for building the new relationship is a theology of responsibility, a theology with a strong community aspect.

B. Theology of Reconciliation

Today, our world is confronted with racial, religious and political problems. At the root of these are politicking and lack of mutual acceptance. People have become self-centered, power-hungry and materialistic. Our society needs more love to neutralize the increasing polarization.

The Bible teaches, "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). If love is confined to our own church, confined to our own brothers and sisters, or confined to our own race, then ours is a selfish and egocentric religion. Our society needs more mutual acceptance and love. To break the racial, religious and political bondage, God's commandments and commission require that we take friends seriously, as a matter of course.

¹ James G. Emerson, *Suffering: Its Meaning and Ministry*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1986, p. 17.

Friendship is both divine and human and is grounded in the Bible. God has been our friend from the beginning. It is he who initiated friendship. Abraham, the man of faith, is called God's friend (II Chron. 20:7 and Is. 41:8). The concern for friendship also appears in the New Testament in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Christ is known as our shepherd, lord, savior and above all our friend. As a divine friend, he loved us so much that he laid down his life. "So, if any one is in Christ, there is a new creation... All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:17-18). The commission of the church is reconciliation. And the kind of theology that we need in our society is not a theology of confrontation but of mutual consultation. To achieve such a theology, much reflection and transformation are required.

The Minjung theology in Korea has become a prophetic voice for the oppressed as defined by Suh Kwang-Sun: "The Minjung are those who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated socially, and kept uneducated in cultural and intellectual matters."

Minjung, literally meaning "the mass of people," are described as the "*han*-ridden people" by Cyris H.S. Moon. *Han* is a Chinese word and means "resentment" or "anger."

The Malaysian Minjung are a much more complicated issue, influenced by racial, religious, political and economic factors. Some thirty years ago, the Malays were the Minjung of that time, "exploited economically, alienated socially, and kept uneducated in cultural and intellectual matters." When Malaysia achieved independence from the British in 1957, the Malays became a privileged group protected by the constitution which they had formulated themselves and for themselves.

The change has perverted the roles of master and servant. "The oppressed find in the oppressor their model of 'manhood,' that is, to be men is to be oppressors. This is the model of humanity." The Malays, now the ruling class, in the liberation process are imitating their former oppressors, namely the British, who possessed the political and religious power, and the Christians, who possessed the economic power. They are repeating what was done to them. The shadow of their former oppressors is still cast over them.

We are glad that the apartheid situation in South Africa has come to an end with the general election in April 1995. However, we do not know what the future holds in store if the African "Minjung" remain what they are, economically exploited and socially alienated. The Korean and Malaysian situations shed some light on the South African situation. To avoid the cycle of retribution and revenge, the church must sensitively and professionally address the negative syndrome.

Fortunately, the Malays have a constructive tradition of *muhibbah*. *Muhibbah* is a Malay word meaning goodwill or harmony—a crosscultural friendship amounting to good fellowship. In Malay, *muhibbah* means social, economic and political well-being for all.

Muhibbah has a community aspect imbued with openness and responsibility. *Muhibbah* is a liberal and tolerant concept of others' culture and religion. It is a genuine spirit of mutual respect and consultation. The church can conveniently adopt this *muhibbah* concept and explore its profound wisdom—a wisdom with the potential of emerging as a powerful theological thought.

The Sabah Theological Seminary, a leadership training institute, is our attempt to respond to the challenge of polarization by providing theological as well as cross-cultural training. Sabah Theological Seminary is a study center in which students of different races and backgrounds coming from all parts of Malaysia are invited to study and live under one and the same roof. The student population represents a good cross-section of the country's racial composition. Here they will learn to appreciate and accept each other's culture and tradition. They will eliminate preconceived ideas rooted in their minds. They are engaged in a continuous dialogue to overcome racially divisive issues now confronting the nation. There is much evidence that our graduates are showing to the community they serve the way of *muhibbah*, which they have learned at the seminary. Hence, the seminary helps to promote racial harmony and thus, national integration.

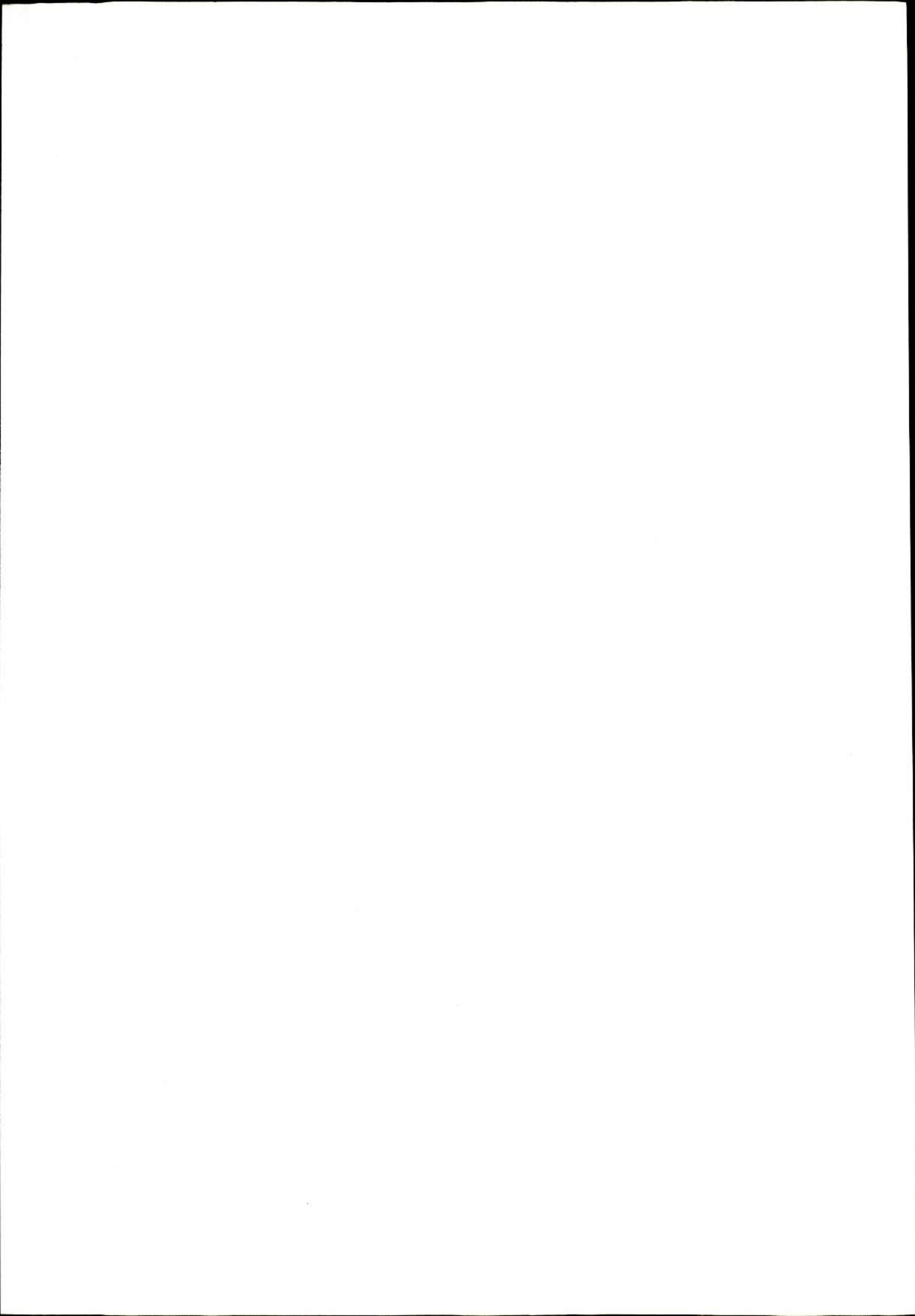
Conclusion

We must "liberate" and contextualize theological education by giving theological students not only the traditional disciplines, but a holistic training. We must recover the doctrine and concept of the church with all its implications, so that it may fulfill its reason for existing by being ecclesiological and missiological. Theological education programs must be flexible enough to train people for ministry and the functions of ministry. Theological institutions have to provide these through traditional as well as non-traditional means so that the impact of Christians may be felt at all levels of society.

A theology of social responsibility and a theology of reconciliation with a strong community aspect is a starting point for a new relationship and a new hope in a multireligious society.

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Interfaith Dialogue and Human Resources Development for Theological Education and Training in the South

by Kambar Manickam

Introduction

The topic "Theological Education and Training in a Multifaith Society" demands wider coverage. It should cover at least three areas, namely, interfaith dialogue, human resources development, and theological education and training in the South. A lot could be said about each of the areas. At one stage, I felt I was in the wilderness and wondered where to start. I decided to focus on theological education and training in the South in the given context of interfaith dialogue and with regard to the need for human resources development planning in South Asia, Africa and Latin America. At the same time I am also aware of my limitations. The reflections of this paper are predominantly based on my experience as a theological teacher and administrator of a theological institution in India, where the process and impact of interfaith dialogue can be seen in its reality. Human resources are also plentiful and hence the need to develop those resources also concerns us much. I hope that some of the conclusions I draw at the end will be of some help applicable to all the countries in the South for obvious reasons.

Theological Education and Ministerial Training—a Bridge Between Interfaith Dialogue at Global and Grassroots Level

Why interfaith dialogue in the countries of the South?

1. For nation-building

Christians live in and are part of the human community of developing countries. Their lives are bound up with that of the total community. As a minority in most of the Asian countries, the Christian community has the task of participating in nation-building and in seeking solutions to the pressing social and economic problems. If there are two fundamental realities in the South, they are religious pluralism and poverty. A theology that does not arise from the context and speak to it, preparing the Christian community for their common struggle and for collaboration with their neighbors, can hardly serve the churches in a multifaith society. Christianity must learn to live with and respond to the other religious traditions that make up their milieu, and this not only in the South. (I say "not only in the South" because the religious face of Europe is also changing fast because of the influx of refugees from Eastern Europe, Sri Lanka, and other countries in the South.)

2. To be relevant in the context of mission

If collaboration and cooperation with people of other faiths are essential for nation-building, it is equally important to meet them in the context of mission. I would like to take an example from the history of world missions pertaining to a Lutheran enterprise. This happened as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century. We all know about the historic landing of the first Protestant (Lutheran) missionaries in India in the year 1706. Within seven years of this landing, the first missionary, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, wrote a book with the title *Genealogy of the Malabar (South-Indian) Gods: A Manual of the Mythology and Religion of the People of Malabar (Southern India)*. He sent the manuscript to his spiritual mentor, A.H. Franke, the director of the mission in Halle (the renowned founder of the orphan asylum and other institutions in Halle). The reply Ziegenbalg received then was that the "printing of the *Genealogy of the South Indian Gods* was not to be thought of, inasmuch as the missionaries [were] sent out to extirpate heathenism, and not to spread heathenish non-sense in Europe."¹ Finally, after 154 years, the manuscript saw the light in 1867, when it was published in Madras (India) by a German, W. Germann. Only after more than a century and a half, this effort to understand the faiths of other people was appreciated. The well-known English missionary and scholar Caldwell describes this book as follows:

The Genealogy of the Malabar (South Indian) Gods, by the celebrated Ziegenbalg, is a remarkable book, with a remarkable history.... Ziegenbalg's work exhibits in a clear and connected form not only the "Genealogy of the Gods"-theme which holds the leading place in the title page, but also all the information he could obtain from books and written communications respecting the names and titles, the attributes and offices of each divinity, the manner in which they are represented by images and pictures, the legends current respecting them, the temples built to their honor, the worship offered to them, the days sacred to them as fast or festival days, and the poems and other books written about them; in short, the whole round of popular Hinduism.

While Caldwell appreciates Ziegenbalg for the contents of his book, we must not stop at that. Look at the difficulties Ziegenbalg had in India with the Danish government officers in Tranquebar, though he had been sent out there by the Danish king. The linguistic ability he had developed, learning Tamil to the extent of quoting Hindu sources in his book and explaining the meaning of names and terms is truly marvelous. (Please remember that there are 246 letters in the Tamil alphabet!) Look at the chronology of his first ten years as missionary in Tranquebar:

- 1706 — landed in Tranquebar
- 1707 — baptized the first converts (five Portuguese-speaking Indians)
- 1711 — completed the translation of the New Testament in Tamil
- 1713 — wrote *The Genealogy of the Malabar (South Indian) Gods*
- 1716 — established a seminary for training local evangelists.

¹ W. Germann's preface to the German version of the book, p. xv.

Here, we are led to note that in Ziegenbalg's strategy, interfaith dialogue (he had to do dialogue with a number of Hindu Brahmins and others to collect the materials) preceded imparting theological education; or put differently, for him, understanding others' faith was as important as theological and ministerial training. Thus, he did it in the context of mission.

In the context of the struggle for economic freedom, human dignity and in the face of the rise of fundamentalism, what should be the role of theological education and training in the South?

3. The role of theological education and training

When graduates leave the seminary and begin their ministry in any one of the countries in the South, they cannot close their eyes to the realities surrounding them. In India, the pastor is expected to minister to the poor rural villagers who may be a mixture of Christians, Hindus and Muslims. The concept of "minister of a parish" meaning that the minister will minister to a parish made up exclusively of Christians is nowadays outdated. (Even in Europe, with the changing face of religious groups due to the influx of refugees of different faiths, we can no longer speak of a geographical parish comprising only Christians.) For example, the liberation of the millions of Dalit Christians (Dalits are the most oppressed and dehumanized community under the caste system) lies in the liberation of all Dalits, the majority of which are Hindus. In such circumstances, how can we envisage a ministry exclusively to Christians in India, while economically both groups are suffering? How is it possible for a pastor to minister only to one section of the poor? What is our concern then for people of other faiths? How are the seminaries to equip their students so that they may witness to the commission of our Lord in circumstances such as these?

In the Indian seminaries the teaching of religions was part of the curriculum right from the beginning, albeit from different motifs. (This may also be true for other countries in the South.) Later, courses and practical exposures were introduced under Mission Studies. Now, as far as India is concerned, the courses in Interfaith Dialogue have been taken away from the Religions and Mission Studies Faculty and transferred to the Theological Faculty under the title "Christian Response to Other Faiths." Below, I shall give the course *objectives* in order to illustrate the reasons for such a change:

- 1) To equip the student for a meaningful Christian witness in the context of plurality of faiths.
- 2) To clarify particular religio-philosophical and sociological issues in dialogue between Christianity and other faiths.
- 3) To guide students to understand their own faith in the light of other faiths.

- 4) To help students to obtain an objective understanding of other faiths, especially in the light of their own faith.

Again, at the end of the syllabus there is a section on "Towards a constructive response to other faiths" which includes the following:

- a) Conceptual clarification of the following terms: "fulfillment," "uniqueness," "decisiveness," "salvation through Jesus Christ," etc.
- b) Truth claims and faith affirmations.
- c) Signs and expressions of meaningful dialogue:
 - i) Indigenous worship and theology.
 - ii) Common celebrations of festivals with people of other faiths.
 - iii) Participation in struggles and developmental programs along with people of other faiths.

In Africa, the Islam in Africa Project has brought about, by way of seminars, some substantial progress to arrive at insights for intercommunal harmony. Stuart A. Brown, a Canadian who has had considerable work experience in Africa, says that "[a] fair and thorough understanding of Islam is now of prime importance to Christians in every part of Africa."²

In this connection, it should also be noted that the initiatives for interfaith dialogue are not the exclusive exercises of Christians in India. For example, a secular university in Madurai offers a Master's Degree program in Philosophy and Religion and in its curriculum, "Study of Interfaith Dialogue" is one of the subjects the students are expected to take. Then also, independent institutions like Gandhi Peace Foundation are conducting interreligious prayers every week. At one time, when there were conflicts between Christians and Hindus, the head of a Hindu *mutt* (religious headquarters), together with Christians, Muslims and Hindus, took the initiative to set up a permanent forum for fostering peace, the "Divine Grace Forum."

On the one hand there are dialogue programs at the local level, and on the other, ecumenical organizations like the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) conduct seminars, consultations, workshops, etc. on interfaith dialogue. At this juncture, the theological colleges and seminaries have a greater role to play, because they are the ones who prepare leaders for church and society. In other words, theological institutions should be fed with concepts emerging from international consultations and research. On the other hand, the experience gained

² "Interfaith Dialogue and Ministerial Formation," in *Theological Education in Africa: Quo Vadimus?*, p. 127.

by theological institutions through their experiments and their involvements must be shared with other institutions in different parts of the world through global organizations such as the LWF and the WCC. Thus, theological education and ministerial training become a bridge for interfaith dialogue at the global and at grassroots levels.

Human resources development and theological training

The Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Kristiansand paper on Human Resources Development summarizes the development of the LWF's policy with regard to scholarships, training and exchange programs over the years. Human resources are abundant in the world, most of all in the South. Is the enormous population growth in the South considered a blessing or a curse? What are the potentials for development and witness in church and society? As stated in 1992 by the LWF *ad hoc* group on Human Resources Development, the development of human resources includes leadership training, management skills training, education, personnel development, etc. In other words, the aim of the Office for Human Resources Development should be to enable people to fulfill their potential. This is what we need in the countries of the South, where, even though there are a number of people who could be trained for leadership, these are not identified and if they are, not encouraged; so we continue to experience the lack of good leadership in our churches and church institutions. When Gurukul Theological College in Madras was revived, many people asked me whether admissions in our seminary (Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, an ecumenical seminary for members of the church of South India in Tamilnadu and other Lutherans) would decrease. However, over the past nine years their fears were disproved. In fact, we are receiving more and more requests for admission every year, more than we can manage. At present, we have 174 students, though the seminary was originally built for 60 students. Additional facilities have been provided in the meantime, mainly for students coming from abroad. This was possible only by converting one missionary bungalow into an ecumenical students' hostel. The same building is used as a guest house when there are no ecumenical students. It must be said here that all our ecumenical students are coming from the North. Human resources development means that development benefits should go to all human beings at all levels and of all ages.

What is real human resources development?

Human resources development does not mean just to provide scholarships and exchange programs. Of course, these are helpful in equipping a person to take up leadership in the community. But what happens to persons who are not encouraged to practice what they have learnt in the seminary? Some church leaders without foresight just nip in the bud the ambitions of young pastors who want to be with the people to liberate them. In fact, one such pastor had to come back to the seminary for "asylum." After having served the people through the seminary's involvement programs, he wanted to go back to his church. By that time his bishop had come to know of the struggles this pastor had

led: he had been arrested, brought to court and put in prison for a few weeks. Therefore the bishop wrote to me, saying that he would not like to take a person for the ministry who had undergone simple as well as rigorous imprisonment! If this is the state of affairs in the leadership of the church, what hope is there for the development of all our human resources? What is the use of introducing alternate patterns of theological education? The situation is really disheartening at times. Hence, human resources development and personnel development programs must comprise the training of bishops and other church leaders. This is where our real future challenges are.

Cooperation in Developing Human Resources in Multifaith Contexts of the North and South

by Roger Nostbakken

Introduction

Most North American Christians of my generation were raised in a relatively homogeneous religious environment. The context was one of family stability, with the church as part of the life experience and the existence of other religions seen as belonging to different cultures in lands far removed from our own. As an example, both my aunt and my brother went to West Africa as missionaries to a political, cultural and religious setting wholly alien to their knowledge and experience, but out of a sense of being called to serve people of other religions. In those decades before the explosion of the ecumenical movement, after Vatican II, even marginal contacts within the wide family of Christianity were tentative at best and freighted with hesitation and suspicion. We existed in an environment of Christian denominations living side-by-side in sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile competition, hardly speaking to one another and certainly not thinking of dialogue with persons of other faith systems. In point of fact, in the rural communities of western Canada and in most of the urban centers as well other faiths were regarded as curiosities at best.

There were indeed persons of other faiths in communities nearby, sometimes in substantial numbers. The aboriginal peoples were confined largely to reserves and their indigenous religions were not taken seriously. One might have tried to win them over to Christianity, but no thought was given to talking to them about their religious beliefs and practices. Indeed, Anglicans and Roman Catholics established schools and missions on the reserves with the specific aim of educating these peoples in the Christian tradition and intending to deliver them from what was seen as the ignorance and bondage of their traditions of spirituality. Many North American aborigines now have some bitter memories of their mission school experiences where often open hostility to indigenous language, culture and religion predominated.

But there was also another large group of persons not raised in the traditions of Christianity. These were the Asian immigrants, largely Chinese, brought in to build the transcontinental railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. These Chinese immigrants left settlements in virtually every village, town and city, particularly in the West. Even today there is hardly a village anywhere without a Chinese restaurant or grocery store or both. Although gradually integrated into the business communities, these Asian immigrants were not seen as part of any religious community and existed almost entirely alienated from any kind of conversation taking place among the Christian churches and denominations. Curiously, by and large, they were not even seen as subjects for outreach by the Christian churches, and their religious traditions

were objects of speculation if considered at all. Certainly no one was thinking of engaging in dialogue with them about the nature of their religious traditions.

An enormous change of perspective in these matters has taken place in my own lifetime. There is now no large or medium-sized city in Canada that does not have its Hindu and/or Sikh temples, its Islamic mosques or Jewish synagogue, its Buddhist groups and new religious movements existing alongside of and sometimes in competition with the Christian churches. There has also sprung up an astonishing variety of contacts among these religious groups: common study groups, visits to worship meetings, informal exchanges. Nevertheless, sometimes deep and bitter conflicts over issues of freedom and justice and the right to religious expression arise. In our community, for example, we have informal Jewish-Christian, Christian-Islamic and Hindu-Christian conversations. Respect for indigenous religious observance is scarce, and interreligious conversations of an unstructured character are rare, but existing nonetheless. The possibility, therefore, of participating in a consultation on theological education and training in a multifaith society has as much relevance for us in North America as for people in Africa, Asia and Latin America, even though our social, political and religious contexts are obviously radically different. I suspect that we in North America have much to learn from the experience that people from other continents have had.

It is also obvious that we live in an increasingly interconnected world in which, in a sense none of us is far away from the other. For example, one of our Canadian students is currently living in Gaborone, Botswana, where he is doing an internship. We are having daily conversations by phone or fax about his experiences. Almost all of our theological institutions in North America have many kinds of international associations through faculty, students and staff. Each year, we have international students on our campus; each year some of our students live abroad in contexts different from their own. Therefore, we all have something to offer and to receive as we consult each other on the important subject of exchange. I would like to begin this look at developing avenues of cooperation by making some observations about the general religious context of our present world.

The Religious Context of this Generation

Christianity as a world religion is in decline in those parts of the world which for generations have been its traditional centers of power, influence and population. If one notes the statistics gathered each year by the Luthern World Federation, one can track with some accuracy what has been occurring just among Lutherans. Here are some statistics:

for	Europe	North America	Africa	Asia	Latin America
1984	50,468,783	8,819,917	3,872,916	3,431,271	1,201,716
1988	39,346,430	8,790,907	4,688,364	4,072,364	1,240,133
1990	38,777,788	8,643,062	5,616,351	4,601,438	1,246,076
1991	38,475,712	8,658,509	5,720,534	4,485,078	1,252,283
1992	37,829,209	8,685,509	6,125,809	4,382,550	1,177,245
1993	37,622,275	8,654,933	6,235,575	4,558,520	1,328,189

These are interesting figures. They demonstrate that the number of Lutherans is significantly in decline in Europe. It is virtually static in North America and Latin America, but it is showing a dramatic increase in Africa and Asia, the greatest growth taking place in Africa,¹ where the Lutheran population has almost doubled in the last ten years. If one takes the statistics for Christianity as a global religion, the figures are remarkably similar. My sources are not very up-to-date, but the ones available at least show the trend. Christianity is increasing most rapidly in the so-called developing countries if we compare with the figures of nine years ago. For example, the growth of Christianity was as follows:

In 1990 470,991,000 in northern & western world
 87,000,000 in third world

in 1985 557,678,000 in northern & western world
 685,610,000 in third world

Or put another way, they were:

In 1990 465,191,992 Caucasian Christians
 33,942,931 Asian
 20,854,298 African

In 1985 989,563,289 Caucasian
 176,129,341 Asian
 247,839,543 African²

The growth of Christianity in the two-thirds world has been dramatic.

¹ *Lutheran World Information*, Geneva.

² Barret, D., *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1982, p.4.

The denominational distribution is also interesting. At present there are in the world approximately:

Roman Catholics	900,000,000
Protestants	277,912,000
Orthodox	169,648,000
Lutherans	60,163,000
Anglicans	52,100,000

What the figures show is that in this century Christianity has shifted dramatically towards the south and east from the west and the north. In the LWF, for example, both the president and the general secretary are now from the southern hemisphere. There are now about 207,000,000 Spanish speaking Christians, 196,000,000 English-speaking Christians, 85, 000, 000 German speaking Christians. Moreover, Christianity remains by far the world's dominant religion in terms of numbers. It has, in fact, about twice as many adherents as the next largest religious group. According to 1985 statistics, there were in the world the following numbers of adherents to religious groups projected to the year 2000.³

	1985	%	2000	%
Christian	1,684,544,000	32.4	2,019,921,366	32.3
Muslim	817,065,219	17.1	1,200,653,040	19.2
Hindu	677,564,600	13.5	859,252,260	13.7
Buddhist	295,570,780	6.2	359,092,100	5.7
Chinese folk religions	187,994,026	3.9	158,470,664	2.5
Jews	17,838,060	0.4	20,173,560	0.3
Sikhs	16,149,890	0.3	23,831,700	0.4
Tribal religions	91,130,380	1.9	100,535,850	1.6
World population	(4,781,123,975)		6,259,642,000	

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

It is apparent that Christianity is hardly in decline. Only western and northern theologians speak of the post-Christian era because of the decline in those areas. In point of fact, Christianity exercises more power and influence in more countries and societies than ever in human history. The question is not so much how Christianity will survive but rather how Christian churches will now understand their mission and what the criteria shall be for determining how we enter into conversation with other world religions and with the growing numbers of those who espouse no religion.

According to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*:

There are today Christians and organized Christians in every inhabited country on earth. The church is therefore now, for the first time in its history (1985) ecumenical in the literal meaning of the word: its boundaries are co-extensive with the oikumene, the whole inhabited world.⁴

But there are other realities which we need to take into account as well, if we are to understand our world's religious contexts. For example, the number of atheists and non-religious shows a modestly increased percentage of the world population. The following figures are interesting:⁵

	1900	%	1975	%	1985	%	2000	%
Atheists	225,620	0.0	179,595,100	4.5	210,643,540	4.4	262,447,550	4.2
Non-religious	2,923,330	0.2	626,017,979	15.8	805,784,853	16.9	1,071,888,370	17.1

Christianity as a percentage of the world population has remained relatively constant in this century. Islam, on the other hand, has grown from 12 percent of the world population in 1900 to a projected 19.2 percent in 2000. Hinduism remains about the same and Buddhism shows a steady decline. Furthermore, an increasing complication of interfaith dialogue arises from the complexity of Christian denominationalism itself.

One of the consequences of the mission work of the western and northern denominations has been a massive proliferation of non-white indigenous denominations in the two-thirds world. In 1900, there were 1900 Christian denominations. By 1970 there were 18,160, 19,400 by 1975, 20,780 by 1980 and 22,190 by 1985. This has, of course, produced competition, rivalries and clashes among denominations and confusion for the non-Christian. The remarkable success and growth of the ecumenical movement mitigates this to some extent. Nonetheless, the number of new denominations being formed each year vastly outnumbers the councils, fellowships and transdenominational unions that have marked the past several decades of Christian denominational experience.

⁴ *World Christian Encyclopedia*, p. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

A further complication arises from another phenomenon and that is the appearance of what *The Atlantic Monthly* has called "the coming anarchy" arising from the fragmentation of old political boundaries: the rise of ethnic rivalries; the power of new regionalisms and the challenge to the social fabric of the planet as a result of shortages, crime, overpopulation, tribalism and the growing imbalance of wealth and poverty in the world.⁶

One may, on the one hand, speak of an emerging global culture created by communication and information technologies, capital flow and worldwide distribution networks of consumer products. Stock markets around the world are in constant contact, communication technologies have shrunk our world, and there is a growing sense of ecological and political interdependence. There is, in a sense, a "homogenized, globally shared reality that seems poised to become a single world culture."⁷

But one may also speak of what has been called a "lebanonization of the world in which small cultural committees assert their autonomy from—and sometimes in spite of—larger social units."⁸ This sort of phenomenon, with which we are familiar in all parts of the world—in my own country regionalization and separation movements—raises questions about the kind of climate within which dialogues can take place.

Muslims and Christians who once lived in peace and harmony in the former Yugoslavia are now in bitter conflict. Protestants and Roman Catholics remain locked in battle in Northern Ireland. The world in which we carry on the mission of the church, the evangelization and re-evangelization of the world is enormously complex. We are inextricably interrelated but often remain suspicious and mistrustful of our neighbors. Nonetheless, given our interrelatedness, there is no alternative now but to talk to one another with openness, honesty and persistence. It is necessary that we carry forward the process already begun. Interfaith dialogue is in many respects a recent phenomenon. Theological education in a multifaith context is a new and virtually untried experience in North America. It has always existed in Asia and Africa where Christianity has been a minority religion. Nonetheless, some possibilities of cooperation do exist.

The Globalization of Theological Education in North America

In 1986, the Association of Theological Schools in North America (ATS) proposed that the 1990s be declared a decade of globalization. This arose from the realization of the truly global context of the church. In the previous pages we have documented to some

⁶ Kaplan, R., "The Coming Anarchy," *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 273, no. 2, Feb. 1994.

⁷ Schreiter, R., "Christian Theology Between the Global and the Local," *ATS Theological Education*, Spring 1993, Pittsburgh, p. 114.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

degree the extent of the church's global reality and its growing interface with other world religions. As Mark Heim noted in an article entitled "Mapping Globalization for Theological Education":

... we face the fact that the Church itself is spread like salt throughout our world and that most of its members belong to the majority races and cultures of Asia, Africa, Latin America. Adequate theological education requires us to recognize this reality and reflect it in our teaching and ministry.⁹

In the same article Heim notes several impulses towards the globalization of theological education. Firstly, the early church itself was concerned with all of the world that was known to the first Christians. This included parts of Asia, Africa and Europe.

Secondly, the modern mission movement, in spite of its colonialism and often patronizing approaches, was responsible for the establishment of many if not most of the so-called younger churches in Asia and Africa.

Thirdly, the ecumenical movement, which is largely an offspring of the mission movement, set up the first forum in which a global consciousness of the church began to be experienced. In seeking unity among the world's churches the ecumenical movement has fostered contacts which have, in some cases, broadened to include other religions.

Fourthly, the proliferation of departments of religion at secular universities has precipitated much interchange of religious perspectives at least in academic circles in North America. World religions are increasingly becoming a compulsory course of studies, even at most North American seminaries.

Fifthly, the "struggle against racial, economic injustice and political oppression or discrimination" has united people of many faiths and provided a basis of solidarity for those previously without apparent common interest.¹⁰

Sixthly, the growth of the so-called information age and its explosion of technology gives promise of linking all parts of the globe in a matter of seconds. When my aunt went to West Africa in 1936, we waited months to hear from her, and during the war heard nothing at all. Now I can speak to a friend in Cameroon by phone, if I wish. The ease of travel, the mixed blessings of television and satellite links bring most of the world into our living rooms. So, globalization has become a fact. The question is what goals we set for ourselves in theological education, for example, as part of this process of globalization. It is probably true that the northern and western countries are the most culturally, racially and ethnically diverse in the world. It may well be that there is not the same desire in parts of, for example, Asia and Africa to pursue the goals of

⁹ Heim, M., in Supplement I, *ATS Theological Education*, 1990, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

globalization we are setting for ourselves. Perhaps in Asia and Africa there may even be a need to resist globalizing trends in order to affirm and maintain distinctive cultural, racial and religious identities. As Mark Heim has noted:

We need to be clear that the agenda of globalization that we are discussing is a very specifically Western one, addressing the contexts of theological schools in North America and their needs to attend to the whole church and the whole world.¹¹

Kosuku Koyama, in a recent article entitled "Theological Education: Its Unities and Diversities,"¹² examines the global reach of Western theology and raises the question whether Western theological paradigms are appropriate for Asia and Africa. He speaks of the uniformity of a Western educational "prestige system" which shrouds degrees with mystique and prestige, and questions the adequacy for Asia and Africa of a system which does not reflect the spiritual, religious, and cultural heritage of its own context.

A Thai student, whether in Bangkok or Chicago, tries with heroic effort to understand the philosophical world of Paul Tillich. A Nigerian student seeks to comprehend Alfred North Whitehead. A Beijing woman studies American feminist theology... The "academic policy committees" of theological schools hardly discuss what is accomplished by submitting students to this one-way traffic system of mental torture... It is like pulling out a healthy set of teeth and replacing them with false teeth.¹³

When we therefore talk about areas of cooperation in developing human resources in multifaith contexts of the north and south we need to recognize that both, perceptions and needs, may be very different, depending on the contexts. Following the Conference on Theological Education in Southeast Asia held in Bangkok in 1956, at least two fundamental reactions to the dominance of Western theology should be noted.

First there are theologians in Asia, Africa and Latin America who feel that theological education in those contexts must of necessity reject Western theological formulations. There is not a reason why the experience of Western Caucasian humanity should become the standard of theological expression. In many respects some of the tribal cultures of Africa may well be closer to the world of the Bible than Western experience.

On the other hand, while Western (or for that matter any other) formulations are not universal, there is global significance in most, and in any case theological education must avoid exclusivity.¹⁴ Furthermore, it is to be recognized that there is an intercultural nature to theology which, while recognizing the past dominance of western and northern theology, calls for a methodology of mutuality between east and

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹² *ATS Theological Education*, Autumn 1993, Supplement I, pp. 87-105.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

west, north and south.¹⁵ Such a methodology is dialogical. "Today," Koyama says, "we know this planet earth is one ark with all humanity aboard. How can we make a viable planetary community of humanity without knowing and appreciating the differing cultures and religions of the peoples?"¹⁶

The concern with globalization of the ATS in North America may seem a preoccupation of Western theological education. Nonetheless, because of the persuasiveness of Western theology, globalization has relevance outside the West, if only to encourage the indigenization of theology in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We live in a world of what has been called "agitated realities" in which the unities and diversities of theology are not settled formulae but form the context of theological education today.

Jürgen Moltmann in a recent article reflects also on the looming prospects of "Christianity in the third millennium" and identifies four "investments and liabilities" Christianity takes into the next millennium:¹⁷

1. The blessing of the ecumenical movement and the curse of the new confessionalism and new nationalism balkanizing Europe.
2. The modernism of Christianity and its new fundamentalism and the consequent problematic that arises.
3. The great expansion of Christianity in Africa and Asia and the persisting Eurocentrism of the traditional churches.
4. The rising power of other world religions making Christianity once again a marginal [sic] religion and the challenge to interreligious dialogue.

Possibilities of Cooperation

Given the realities we have addressed and given the increasingly complex demands of theological education, what are the areas of cooperation between north and south? In the first place, some necessary changes must take place in theological curricula. Many North American seminaries are now in the process of curriculum reviews, trying to assess what will need to be taught and what the nature and form of preparation for ministry in the third millennium of the Christian church's existence will be.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁷ *Theology Today*, vol. 51, no. 1, April 1994, Princeton, New Jersey, pp. 75-89.

1. Curricular change

Every theological student needs to have some sense of the global culture and the global nature of the church. This is necessary to transcend the tendencies towards what has been called an ethnocentric neo-confessionalism. People in congregations understand the church in terms of their experience and they must have meaningful symbols and languages so that the church may become really a part of their lives. At the same time the church's universality must be understood as transcending and encompassing confessional and regional identities. The situation in central Europe, for example, is perhaps anticipatory: there are Orthodox Serbs, Roman Catholic Croats, Christian Armenians, Muslim Azarbaijanis, Orthodox Romanians, Roman Catholic Poles, Protestant and Lutheran Germans, etc.¹⁸ The burgeoning of denominations in North America and in parts of Africa and Asia is a further example of the need for global understanding.

2. Intercultural experience

Most North American and European seminaries have students from Asia, Africa and Latin America on their campuses. The exchanges have normally been for faculty from the North and West to go to the Asian and African seminaries to bring our models of theological education, and for African and Asian students to come to our seminaries to learn from our traditional eurocentric models. Perhaps the time has come to reverse this trend: to send increasing numbers of our students for a year or more to a two-thirds world institution and bring some of their professors to our schools and seminaries. Unless we do something of this kind we will continue to be isolated from any profound or meaningful understanding of one another's cultures and traditions.

3. The twinning of theological institutions

The Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon is at present seeking to create a specific fraternal relationship with three overseas seminaries or Bible schools, one in Hong Kong, one in Germany and one in Ethiopia. The impetus for this has arisen from particular contacts our seminary has established with the Chinese constituency in Canada, with the German community and a pastor from Ethiopia studying here. As we explore these relationships we are trying to discover what form they should take. What is most helpful? At what stage should non-North American students come to us? Given the existence of some excellent theological schools in Asia and Africa, is there really any reason for undergraduate students to come to our schools or should we receive only graduates?

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Further, given the high costs of travel and accommodation we must find the most helpful manner of assisting students who have only minimal resources to get the opportunity for studying abroad.

4. Cooperation between departments of religion and theological seminaries

In North America the typical pattern is for departments of religion at universities to be distinctly separate from the theological schools existing on the same campus. The programs of the departments of religion are non-confessional and objectively study religions as phenomena, while theological schools are confessional, denominational and professional schools with specific but more limited objectives. Theological schools in North America tend not to examine the relation of Christianity to other religions. A specific effort must be made to develop a "simple religious literacy" about other religions and taught at the same level as introductory courses in theology. If we fail to do this, the result will be our continuing isolation in the global context of religious experience.¹⁹

5. The development of specific programs

Given that interfaith dialogue is new in North America and that we are only beginning to explore intercultural relations, the development of new programs has just begun. Luther Seminary (Saint Paul, Minnesota) has a new Global Mission Education Program focusing on Islamic studies, which could become a model for the future. By concentrating on a particular world religion this program allows for both undergraduate and graduate work in Islamic Studies. A crosscultural exchange program at the same institute offers an experience in Zimbabwe in connection with the University of Zimbabwe and the United Theological College, Harare. Such programs are not yet common, but they do offer promise.

6. The continuing globalization program of ATS

The ATS globalization program represents a concerted attempt by North American seminaries to address the challenge of theological education in a multifaith context. When this program was launched in 1986, an analysis was made of the patterns of student and faculty exchange, particularly of students coming to North America from abroad. At that time the overwhelming number came from Asia.²⁰ The next largest number came from Africa and Europe, but surprisingly few came from Latin America. Concerning Lutheran schools, the largest number of students went to LSTC in Chicago; it is obvious that theological seminaries other than Lutheran drew the largest numbers. No pattern of enrollment emerged, and the schools represented a spectrum

¹⁹ Schruter, R., "Christian Theology between the Local and the Global," *ATS Theological Education*, Spring 1993, p. 120.

²⁰ Schuller, P., "Globalization in Theological Education: Summary and Analysis of Survey Data," *ATS Theological Education*, Spring 1986, pp. 19-56.

from conservative to liberal. Of those overseas students at North American schools 50 percent were from Asia; 18 percent from Africa; 11 percent from Europe, 9 percent from the Caribbean; 8 percent from Latin America; 4 percent from Australia.

*Designation of countries of non-resident theological students
by First/Third World classification*

First World (Western)		Second World (Eastern block)		Third World (Eastern/developing)	
United Kingdom	62	Poland	16	Korea	217
Australia	39	Hungary	5	Nigeria	66
Germany	27	Romania	5	India	66
Switzerland	12	Czechoslovakia	4	Japan	65
Italy	9			Hongkong	52
New Zealand	8	Total	30	Brazil	42
Total	157			Taiwan	32
				South Africa	32
				Philippines	31
				Mexico	27
				Indonesia	24
				Kenya	23
				Jamaica	22
				Ghana	19
				China	18
				Vietnam	17
				Singapore	17
				Malaysia	15
				Cuba	15
				Zimbabwe	13
				Uganda	13
				Guyana	11
				Bahamas	10
				Tanzania	10
				Ethiopia	9
				Caribbean	8
				Liberia	8
				Malawi	8
				New Zealand	8
				Total	898

Even in 1986 it was obvious that the student and faculty exchanges were concerned primarily with crosscultural rather than interfaith exchanges. By 1993 it was apparent the concept of globalization had broadened to include attention to other world religions. Some major barriers also became apparent, perhaps largest among them the financial. In a time of budget limitations and institutional retrenchments it is not easy to expand programs. Looking ahead however some specific goals can be identified as well as some specific problems.

Goals

1. Recognition that the global reality will shape the context for the mission and ministry of the school. The mission statement will reflect the school intention to prepare persons for this context.
2. The curriculum will embody the global context of theological education. Students will be required to become competent in crosscultural understandings through exchange programs in non-Western cultures.
3. The worship life of the community will incorporate liturgies, prayers and hymns from other cultures.
4. Faculty will be expected to have crosscultural experience and to show a commitment to global openness when they allocate their time and resources.
5. Administrative leadership will show sensitivity to and inclusion of the two-thirds world and seek linkages with overseas schools.
6. The budget of the school will show some commitment to global experience and seek to provide resources for students and faculty to participate in exchange programs.

Problems

1. North American seminaries remain dominated by North American and European cultural and religious experience. Few have had experience in the Two-Thirds World cultures.
2. Language is limited usually to English or, if a second language is spoken, it is northern European rather than Spanish, Portuguese, or an Asian or African language. This seriously limits understanding other cultures.
3. Using scholars from Asia, Africa and Latin America is important, but a commitment must be made to build the resources of the two-thirds world institutions, especially with regard to graduate programs.

4. Revising curricula cannot simply mean to add on crosscultural and global courses. Traditional courses must be developed from crosscultural and interfaith perspectives.
5. Exchange programs are expensive, and students coming to North America often suffer a significant culture shock. Also transfer of credits from one institution to another are sometimes a problem.
6. The provincialism of some North American seminaries' constituencies limits their outlook. In some parts of North America immigration meets with increasing resistance; some people are ideologically opposed to importing other cultural and religious perspectives.
7. Finances are a serious problem for most North American seminaries. In times of retrenchment, thinking globally becomes problematic.
8. Many are having theological problems with regard to interfaith dialogue and it remains a low priority for them. For others, a kind of Christian triumphalism prohibits serious interfaith dialogue.

Globalization is a North American concept viewed perhaps with some suspicion in the two-thirds world. Nonetheless, North Americans are seriously attempting to broaden their outlook and to commit themselves to expand their understanding of the nature and mission of the church.

Conclusion

Andrew Chiu, in an article entitled "Ministry and Theological Education in Dialogue," talked about the necessity for professional theologians to listen.²¹ Theologians are traditionally, as he points out, "trained to become experienced speakers.... But you will not find a course in learning how to listen... in any of our school catalogs."²² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his *Life Together*, also spoke of the "ministry of listening."²³

Christians [he says], especially ministers, so often think they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking. ... But Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by Him who is Himself the great listener....²⁴

²¹ *Theology in Dialogue*, eds. J. Paul Rajashekar & Satoru Kishii, LWF, Geneva, 1987, pp. 99-111.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²³ Bonhoeffer, D., *Life Together*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1954, p. 97.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 98.

Simon Maimela, in a very challenging lecture given at a conference on religious pluralism some years ago, also spoke of the problem of listening.

... to conclude that there is no salvation in the African traditional religions simply because the focus is not on individual sin and anxiety about person salvation is to attempt to prescribe what salvation should be *rather than to listen* to what Africans say on this. *If one listened*, one might learn not to prescribe something for which an African has never felt any need—life hereafter²⁵ [emphasis mine].

We in North America remain in the position of needing to listen. We must listen to sisters and brothers who have all their lives and through all their Christian history lived in a multifaith context. We must listen to our brothers and sisters from other religious traditions who are moving in increasing numbers into our own previously relatively homogeneous cultures.

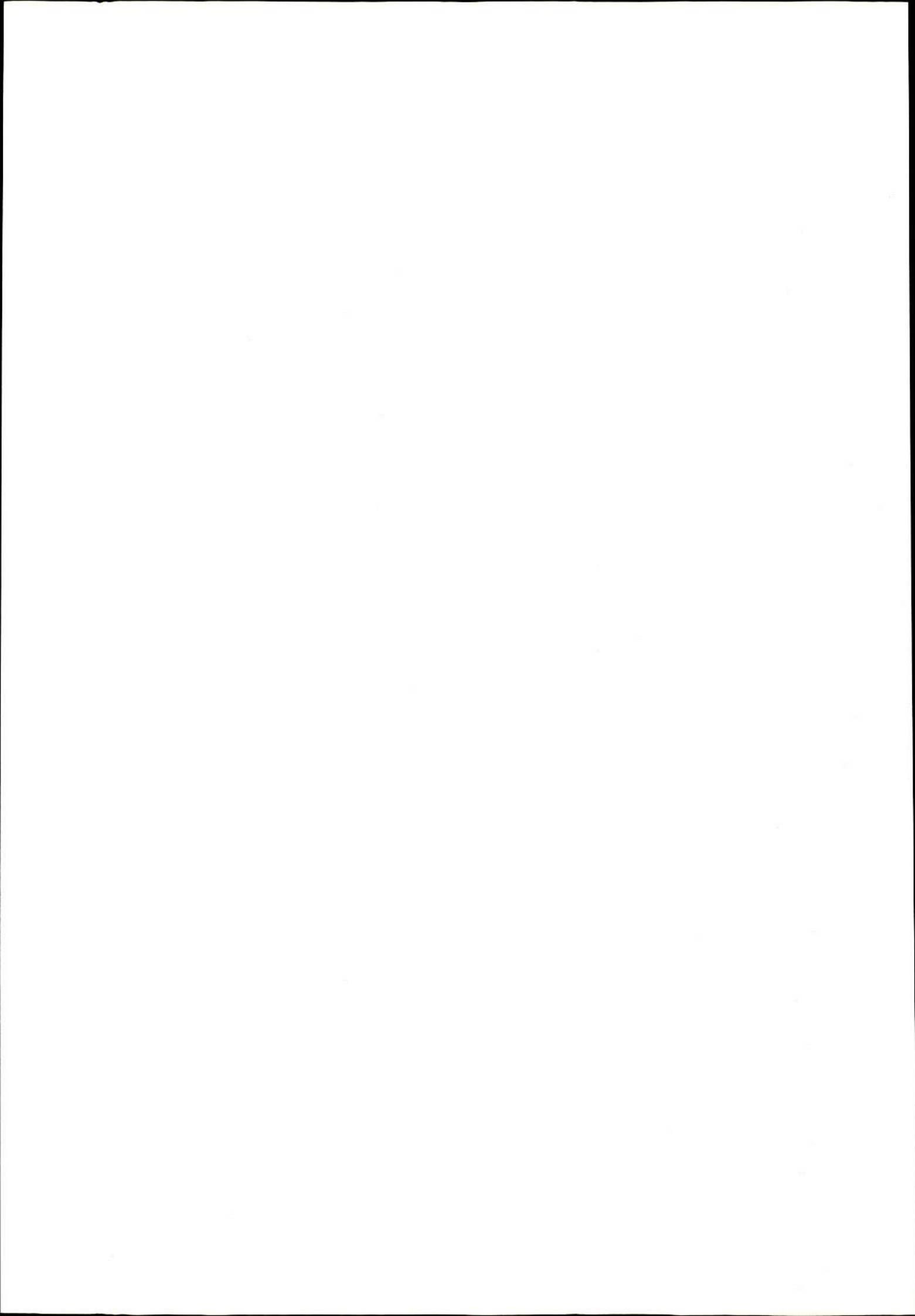
Only after we have listened can we enter into a meaningful dialogue. If we are genuinely committed to the unique place of Christianity among the religions of the world and if we are truly convinced that, as Carl Braaten has said, "... somehow Christ is the place where the contradiction between God and humanity gets resolved...",²⁶ then we need not be defensive "when the truth claims of Christianity and the truth claims of other religions confront one another in the open market of ideas."²⁷

We need one another as we find ourselves in the variety of multifaith contexts in the world. We need to cooperate in developing our resources in this context. In the 1980s, the late Bishop Josiah Kibira spoke of the need for "re-evangelization" of the northern and western countries. Perhaps now we are at the very least able to see the necessity of working together as we seek to carry forth the mission of the Gospel in this world of many faiths.

²⁵ Maimela, S., "A Lutheran Theological Response to Religious Pluralism," *Religious Pluralism and Lutheran Theology*, LWF Report 23/24, 1988, p. 171.

²⁶ Braaten, C., *Religious Pluralism and Lutheran Theology*, p. 121.

²⁷ Maimela, op.cit., p. 176.



A Contextual Perspective on Ministerial Formation

by Vivian V. Msomi

Introduction

I regard the theme of this consultation as important and relevant for our contemporary situation. Our world is a pluralistic one. Therefore we need to do the best we can to understand our neighbors, especially when they seem to be different from us, and especially in their religious commitment. One of my preliminary observations is that I appreciate to be able to witness this inter-desk cooperation within the LWF. It seems to be an attempt at a holistic approach. This is a step in the right direction. We need a broad strategy as we face multifaith issues.

As I consider the topic assigned to me, I am aware of the fact that theological education all over the world is in crisis. It is a crisis of identity *vis-à-vis* of what pastors actually do in a parish and community and the education they receive in preparation for it. I would argue that this is not an African phenomenon, but that it is universal. The issue and challenge of theological education could be considered from a universal as well as from a contextual perspective. The topic assigned to me, however, suggests that we need to consider primarily the contextual perspective. We must seriously consider ministerial formation, especially in the countries of the South.

Educating persons for ministry is one of the major tasks of the churches, i.e., to develop effective and dynamic human resources capital. Any forward-looking agency will take such an objective seriously.

In this paper I would like to address the issue of ministerial formation that is sensitive to the context, especially as it includes the religious dimension. First of all I shall elaborate on the observation that theological education in the 1990s once more faces a crisis of identity. The topic challenges theological educators to consider what they are doing in relation to ministerial formation.

The two keywords in this topic need to be analyzed. They are "contextual" and "ministerial formation."

Ministerial formation has to do with what we sometimes call theological education or training. We ought to achieve more than making our theological students into academics only. Theological education must enable persons to be leaders of Christian communities and to become full of the wisdom that allows them to lead God's people. In this paper I propose that this development has to do with Christian identity which in turn has to do with formation received in a Christian community even before one comes to the seminary. I therefore argue for the need to take interrelatedness seriously in this regard.

The other aspect of our assignment is to consider how theological formation can be related to the context. It seems a fruitless endeavor attempting to develop theological education and formation in a vacuum. A theological education enterprise is developed within a specific milieu, and is therefore contextual by its very nature.

Context is a word that is often used today. When we use it in this paper, we are bearing in mind that each given context includes, *inter alia*, a religious dimension. The religious dimension is the multifaith context which is the reality of our world. Ministerial formation includes a growing understanding for existing in this multifaith situation, especially in the countries of the South. The practical examples presented in this paper will be taken from the African context. I hope that they will have the potential to generate discussions in other countries of the South as well.

Expectations of Christian Communities about Theological Education

Church leaders expect theological education centers to produce well-trained pastors for leading their congregations and parishes. When some of the young pastors, after graduating from these theological schools, fail to fulfill their church leaders' expectations with regard to their leadership role, these church leaders often wonder if healthy ministerial formation is taking place. Sometimes these church leaders even doubt that the lecturers in the seminaries and universities are the right persons to teach in these educational institutions.

There is always the challenge to relate education and training to the future pastors' practice. On the other hand, theological educators themselves are generally concerned with meeting the church's expectations. They, therefore, quite often would wish to talk to church leaders in order to hear about their expectations.

Church leaders and theological educators need each other to address the issue of ministerial formation. A sustained dialogue between the two parties needs to be initiated in order to develop a contextual ministerial formation. Theological education is as much for the church as it is for those outside the church. In other words, inasmuch as there is concern for those *in* the church, there should also be concern for those outside the church, our neighbors who are adherents to other faiths. We need inter-faith dialogues. In Africa, for example, we must try to understand African Traditional Religion and Islam. We must understand these religions as they are practiced in the regions where we find ourselves as theological educators.

Ministerial formation is an enterprise for the seminaries and universities as well as for the churches. It is the task of the community of faith which does not exist in a vacuum but exists side by side with other religious traditions. Not only theological educators must show openness for dialogue with these religions, but also the whole Christian community and its leaders as well.

Ministerial formation must develop within a context that is sensitive to the multifaith milieu of our generation. However, we need to bear in mind the serious implications which this reality suggests. I will come to that later. Here we need to focus on the essence of theological education itself.

The Problems of Theological Education

One of the problems of theological education is the gap a theological student has to bridge from scholarly theology to ecclesiastical practice. Theory and practice should not be perceived as two separate entities. Nevertheless, there is often tension in this relationship. The relationship generates an ancient question, as Ebeling observes:

At the beginning of scholasticism the question was posed in the framework of Aristotelian understanding of scholarship whether theology to the extent that it was scholarship at all, was *scientia speculativa* or *scientia practica* (Ebeling 1979: p.114).

Is the nature or essence of theology speculative and practical or predominantly practical? Even Luther had to face this question. Ebeling reports Luther as saying that theology is only practical, and that which in its essence is only speculative does not in fact merit to be called theology. No doubt with that

... he burst the framework within which the problem of the theory of scholarship was treated. He understood the concept of the speculative as especially of the practical in a way different from scholasticism (Ebeling 1979: p. 115).

According to this—the Reformation's new direction and emphasis—, theology was for life, for all the people of God. Theology was designated as exclusively practical for the sake of the primacy of faith that defines and decides life.

In the modern era there has been a lot of emphasis on the need to perceive theory as valid in its relationship to practice. Liberation theologies seem to be critical of a speculative approach which comprehends reality and fails to contribute to its alteration where there is a need for such.

Theological education must constantly strive to relate theory to practice, and practice to theory, doctrine to life, academic criticism to commitment, enquiry to identity. Ministerial formation happens within this dynamic context of learning. For the leaders of Christian communities existing in contexts with a dire need for multifaith dialogue and tolerance, it carries with it a concern for spirituality and Christian identity.

The Dynamic Challenge of the Context to Theological Education and Ministerial Formation

We must learn from each other in theological education. This is the reason why North-South and South-South exchange programs are invaluable. Here, I would like to refer to some projects and to some observations on theological education and ministerial formation as practiced in the countries of the North. These should be taken as case studies to illustrate our current discussion and concern.

In 1956, in the U.S.A., H. Richard Niebuhr presented a report on the study of theological education in the United States and Canada, with the title: *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry*. Niebuhr suggested that the dominant model of the pastor, on that continent, was that of a pastoral director. In his research, Niebuhr observed that the then current model of the pastoral director meant that beside the pastor's traditional functions of preaching, leading the community in worship, administering sacraments, caring for souls and generally presiding over the church, there was also a special characteristic that had to do with the task of equipping lay persons in their expression of the love of God and the neighbor, i.e., to become contextual witnesses. Niebuhr concluded his work by saying that theological education should lead young men and women to an ever-sustained effort to understand the meaning of their work and the special situation in which they worked. I would argue that his observation is also relevant to the countries of the South.

An even sharper debate on theological education in North America has taken place in the 80s and 90s. I shall comment on a few points only.

Hough and Cobb (1985), in their *Christian Identity and Theological Education*, observe that the widespread critique of theological education in the USA is that the curricula are too academic and have little relevance to the actual practice of ministry, whereas there is a danger of technical schools engaging their students only in skills training.

Farley (1983) criticizes theological education for its lack of coherence. He suggests theological education is wisdom or understanding. It should be geared towards leadership and the ministry to the congregation. It is a dynamic focus where "... the areas of leadership responsibility are thus broadened from congregational maintenance activities to areas of congregational mobilization in its ministry in the world" (1983: p. 193). Farley argues for the return of theological education to the community of faith.

Hough and Cobb's work generated, and still does, a lively debate. The core of their argument seems to be that theological education should be based on the identity of the church. The theological school should be a school for professional church leadership. Its main focus should be to try to help people to find out what it means to be a Christian community in the world. They go on to say that sociological, psychological and theological tools should be used to understand the nature of the church. The primary focus should be practical thinking and reflective practice. Seminaries and

theological schools of universities should educate practical theologians to become skilled in the interpretation of theological disciplines. The task of these practical theologians would be to guide the church in its "reflection on appropriate practice for authentic Christian practice" (Hough and Cobb 1985: p. 126).

In summarizing the task which they had set for themselves, Hough and Cobb stated that:

We have argued that education of practical theologians is the joint task of the university and seminary ... The outcome of such a partnership could be the emergence of a new generation of practical theologians, sensitive to the nature of the churches' institutions and prepared to challenge them with a vision for the future (Hough and Cobb 1985: p. 127).

I would like to suggest that what they say has relevance for theological education and ministerial formation in our multifaith context. The time is past for theologians to be mere custodians of dogma. We need people who are prepared to engage in multifaith dialogues and who are skilled at guiding Christians in our modern pluralistic world. Ministerial formation will have to concern itself with this modern world situation.

Contextual Ministerial Formation: African Case Studies

It has been the purpose of this conference to exchange ideas in a South-South dialogue. We are all members of churches that were started mainly by missionaries from Northern/Western countries. Now we are called upon to deal with challenges emanating from our own Southern context. We are facing tough challenges in our different countries and continents. To take Africa, for example, while Christian churches have witnessed dramatic increases in membership, Islam is not in decline either. Many countries in Africa are experiencing a rapidly growing Islam with aggressive outreach programs, so that in some countries Christians are afraid of what may happen to their children. Churches in Africa need pastors who will deal creatively and dynamically with the multifaith context in which Christians find themselves.

This is in fact not a new challenge. It needs to be revisited, however, because missionaries did not do too well when faced with people of other religions having different world-views. We shall come to this later.

Theologians committed to theological and pastoral contextualisation refuse to accept Western theological formulations as *norma normans*. African and liberation theologians agree on this. They all seek to be faithful to the biblical/Christian witness in their own context.

Addressing the Lutheran World Federation's Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Zomba, Malawi, in 1982, John Pobee quoted K.A. Busia, the prominent Ghanaian sociologist and committed Methodist layman:

My contention is that those who have been responsible for the propagation of the Christian gospel in other lands and cultures have not shown sufficient awareness of the need for the encounter between Christian religion and the cosmology of peoples outside European culture and traditions. It is this which makes Christianity either alien or superficial or both (Busia, 1961).

This was a plea for sensitivity in a multifaith context, as well as for contextualisation.

Theologians tend to separate into two camps regarding contextualization. There is a school which perceives contextualization as a powerful and compelling motif to identify with God's mission to the poor and the oppressed. The objective is to listen to their stories and with empathy vicariously to participate in their experience of suffering. The adherents of this school have a passion for the transformation of society. I believe that in this group there is a sustained hope that society will move towards that which God would like it to be.

The other school is primarily concerned with the restoration of the dignity of God's people by approaching a people's culture with respect. It proposes to enter into dialogue with a view to become seriously engaged.

I have no problems with either school of thought. The church and its theologians should identify with the poor and the marginalized and should work for their empowerment. This calls for constant reflection on the meaning of redemptive love in the context of suffering. We should also be concerned with the restoration of people's dignity within their cultural milieu. To be specific, theology and the church should take seriously other religions, especially in the vicinity of Christian members. Traditional African Religion should be engaged in serious dialogue. If we try to ignore this religion, many of our members will remain in a state of confusion that causes considerable stress. It is a pity that in the missionary era of the past there was even doubt that African Traditional Religion could be classified as a religion at all. No wonder that a certain prominent Western scholar is said to have once exclaimed in utter amazement: "How can the untutored African perceive God!" In his mind, sadly lacking in understanding the depth and richness of other religious systems, he could not fathom the fact that Africans believed in God long before the missionary landed on African shores. Nor could he understand what researchers had found, i.e., that African Religions have shown resilience in the midst of Western culture and religious practices.

Ministerial formation in Africa must happen within this multifaith context. Therefore, I suggest that theological and pastoral educational centers need to help the ministerial students grow in their own Christian practical identity, so that they may enter multifaith dialogue freely. Persons who are not certain where they belong will feel threatened by multifaith dialogues.

One of the methods to teach ministerial students multifaith dialogue could be to use case studies. One could ask them to analyze cases and to suggest what they consider appropriate praxis. Let us look at a few cases to illustrate this.

Case Study Number 1

Godfrey Callaway was a missionary in Zululand and Transkei. He worked among the Zulu and the Xhosa, and reports in his diary:

An old woman of about eighty-one has recently been converted here. She has no strength to join with others who go to Membu to be baptized on Easter eve. She came to see me just now. She told me that long before her conversion she believed in God. In her own words, she saw Him and felt the awe of His presence. This is a thought that Rudolf Otto lays much stress upon in his book, *The Idea of the Holy*. You remember that he speaks of the *mysterium tremendum* and goes on to analyze the meaning of both words (Callaway 1932: p. 56).

Case Study Number 2

A missionary visits an African chief. They soon become close friends. The African chief has so much confidence and love for the missionary that on occasion he calls him with his own father's name—a rare honor in Africa. One day the missionary tells the chief that the time for missionary work in other regions has come. Therefore he has to say good-bye. The chief, with great excitement, says: "I am very sorry that you have to go. I shall slaughter one of my fattest oxen for you. I will then ask my ancestors to go with you and keep you and protect you on your travels to regions beyond. I know you will be traveling in dangerous areas." To the utter disappointment of the African chief, the missionary replies: "Sorry, but I do not need the protection of your ancestors nor will I eat of the meat slaughtered as a sacrifice to them. I believe in the living God."

Case Study Number 3

A theological seminary student whose father has died comes to the principal's office with an urgent request. He needs counseling as he has ambivalent feelings about what the members of his extended family are expecting him to do. He is to come home immediately to join in a ceremony of *ukubuyisa*—to bring home the deceased. He does not know what to do. On the one hand, he feels that the essence of being and humanness is to live up to the norms of his clan and extended family; on the other hand, he feels that as a future leader of the church and as a Christian he should live up to the norms of Christianity and not take part in the traditional religious practices of his extended family. He therefore needs guidance. The matter is urgent as he finds himself in a situation of intense conflict and stress.

Analysis of Case Studies

The above case studies identify some of the problems arising in the multifaith context in Africa. There is the challenge of other religions in missionary work, catechetics and evangelistic outreach. The other challenge is our leadership in ministerial formation. We must address the depth of existential African spirituality in a multifaith context. If we neglect this, we run the risk of being superficial, irrelevant at worst.

These case studies could form a framework for a lively discussion on practical theological and missiological relevant approaches in a multifaith context.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the observation that today theological education all over the world is in an identity crisis. There is a quest to find the nature of its contribution in a world that has become even more aware of its multifaith reality. I have argued that ministerial formation is in fact the task of the church and theological centers. I suggested that discovery of pastoral Christian identity is a better terminology than ministerial formation. Christian identity originates in the church. It is developed further to pastoral identity among those who will serve Christian communities. Discovering pastoral identity must happen within a context that is sensitive to other religions.

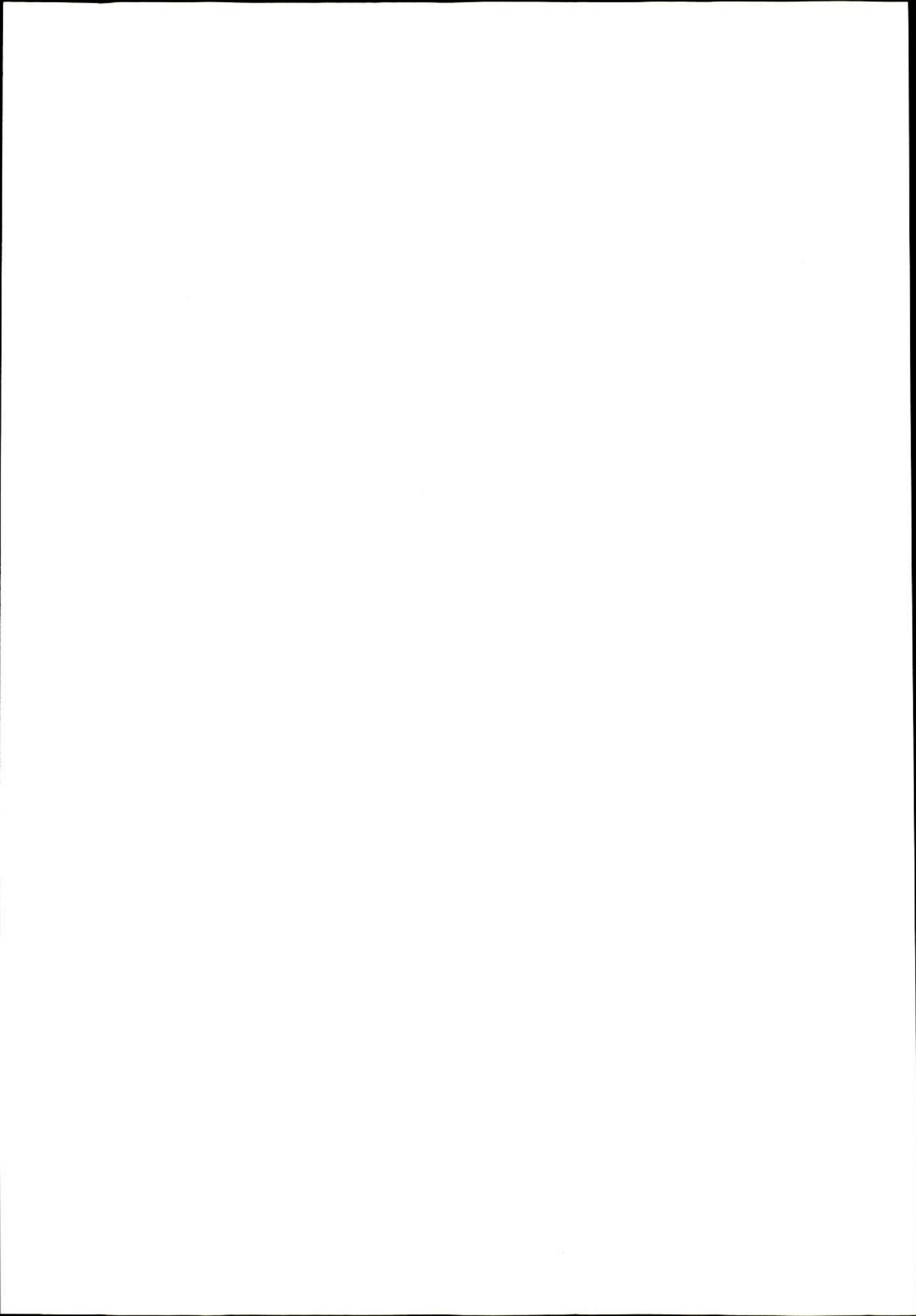
This paper affirms the observation made by the planners of this consultation, namely, that we live in a multifaith world. Sensitivity to this reality is called for. There is great wealth to be found in the exchange of ideas and insights from a South-South perspective. I support and urge this salutary sharing and am convinced that it will be to the benefit of theological education and the churches.

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APPENDICES

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Consultation on Theological Education and Training in a Multifaith Society

(15-19 July 1994, Johannesburg, South Africa)

1. Preamble

- 1.1 This consultation values the current status of dialogue between scholars of different religions, and the new understanding this has produced. However, this "dialogue of the elite" is not the only nor even the most important one. There is also a "dialogue of life" between ordinary people in their everyday, lived experience of a relationship with neighbors and compatriots of different faiths. This constant interaction of ordinary practitioners of different faiths should produce a theology of living together affirmed by and integrated into theological education.
- 1.2 Dialogue with people of other faiths in an attitude of openness and confidence should not mean any unfaithfulness to the gospel and to our confession of faith.

2. Curriculum and Personnel

- 2.1 Multifaith perspectives should be incorporated into a broad spectrum of courses and not be limited to a single, "add-on" course.
- 2.2 There should be at least one interdisciplinary course dealing with the topic.
- 2.3 Where possible, scholars, experts and leaders from other faiths should be involved in teaching and dialogue.
- 2.4 Exposure to actual worship and festivals of other faiths should be encouraged. Multifaith encounters are also valuable in fostering a culture of tolerance and understanding.
- 2.5 Courses in multifaith perspectives should not be relegated to "mission and evangelism" but seen to be important as such.
- 2.6 It is the responsibility of all the teaching faculty to include multifaith perspectives. Their importance is such that curricula will need to be revised and priorities reconsidered.
- 2.7 The exact curriculum content will need to be worked out locally, but drawing on the broader experience of the worldwide Christian community. The context

of each church and culture should be taken into consideration when developing the curriculum.

- 2.8 In the formulation of a curriculum sensitive to multifaith dimensions the experience and perspective of women should be specifically included and affirmed.
- 2.9 Students should be informed about and involved in the process of curriculum development.
- 2.10 Christians have been living side by side with people of other faiths for centuries. This rich resource of history and experience, together with more recent experience, should provide material for case studies which may be used as a mode of instruction; thereby students would become existentially as well as intellectually involved. It is recommended that the LWF initiate the gathering of material and facilitate the publishing of collections with theoretical introductions.
- 2.11. The question of the relationship between Christians and Muslims is particularly urgent in many regions. In every region it will be necessary to identify particular priorities.
- 2.12. Acquiring life skills should be the goal of the curriculum, not only knowledge.

3. Implementation

Teaching faculty should be enabled to incorporate the multifaith perspective by means of the following:

- 3.1 Staff development: to train staff to integrate this concern into their teaching.
- 3.2 Affiliation to or use of universities or other appropriate institutions, so as to take advantage of their resources in this field.
- 3.3 Development of specific expertise by sending people for training, preferably in the context of faculties in the South.
- 3.4 Due account should be taken of the priority given by the LWF to train women for all positions in the church, including teaching faculty, to reach a minimum of 40 percent.

4. Exchange

- 4.1 The exchange of staff South-South already taking place is welcomed and affirmed. This exchange of staff should be encouraged and increased. Resource persons from other regions may provide the needed expertise to initiate or develop multifaith programs.
- 4.2 A greater exchange of students South-South, at all levels, could promote understanding and relationships between regions, including a deeper perspective on multifaith dialogue.
- 4.3 There is an urgent need to strengthen the doctoral programs in the South and to make available a data bank of the study possibilities in the South.
- 4.4 North-South exchanges, both bilateral and multilateral, are also positive, provided that they are mutually beneficial.

5. Resource Center

- 5.1 A resource center, similar to the one in Strasbourg, focusing on multifaith and other South-South issues, should be established in an appropriate setting in the South.
- 5.2 This resource center should improve the work envisaged here by encouraging research-sustained periodicals and publications. Although not a new idea, the creation of this center needs to be re-examined and urgently implemented in the light of current realities in the South and should link up with existing regional resources.
- 5.3 A bibliography of publications and resources should be compiled and circulated. Information about publication centers should also be shared.

6. The Seminary in the Church

- 6.1 In the light of the importance of the "dialogue of life," institutions providing theological education should become aware of their links with the church and the need to strengthen and maintain them.
- 6.2 Theological institutions should continue to offer refresher and development courses for pastors and church workers. To enrich the life of the churches, and

arranged as far as possible in cooperation and consultation with them, they could offer short courses during student vacations.

- 6.3 Church leaders must keep in touch with new developments in theological theory and praxis in the seminaries and universities to assure the training and education is in line with the needs of the church.
- 6.4 The seminaries, together with the churches, should periodically evaluate theological education to make sure that it is linked to the needs of the churches and to the realities of the society which it is to serve.

7. Follow-up

The participants felt that this consultation should be followed up on a global, regional and local level. They requested that, if possible, a further consultation be held in two years.

SCRIPTURE READING

by Petra Röhrs

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

(John 6:16-21)

This is a very well-known passage. John relates how God himself comes to the disciples in the person of Jesus in a situation of fear, darkness and chaos. Their fear is taken away when Jesus says: "It is I; do not be afraid"; this is linked to the many "I am" saying in this Gospel. When we look at this pericope in the synoptics, we see that John intensifies its message. He relates this story as one of the signs in his Gospel and tells how the boat miraculously reaches the shore immediately, adding this to the theophany. In the Gospel of Matthew, the boat is used as a symbol for the church and this was probably a common perception during that time. Therefore I want to use this symbolism and link it to our consultation.

Let us think of the disciples in the boat. They experienced chaos around them and were terrified when they saw Jesus approaching, because they didn't know that it was he. Maybe we are experiencing something similar in the church and in our theological institutions today in relation to other faiths. We huddle up together in the security of our church—our boat; and are afraid of that which is strange. We don't want to be confronted with the other faiths around us; we hesitate to take the risk of dialoguing with people of other religions because we are afraid of losing members. Sometimes we are even under the impression that we have confined the truth in our church or in our theology.

What does this story tell us? It teaches us that Jesus is often where we least expect him to be. The truth can be found beyond our perceptions—there are no limitations to it. Jesus reveals his identity to the disciples and they lose their fear. In order for this to happen, dialogue was necessary. When the disciples realized who Jesus was, they took him into the boat. In our multifaith society today—should we not start dialoguing with people of other religions?

A Brazilian theologian wrote a poem which may be relevant to this text and to our theme. It is about a cock who was under the impression that the sun rose because of his crowing. Often he could not sleep at night; he was afraid that he would miss the moment and that he would forget to crow and consequently the sun would fail to rise. It so happened that one morning the cock overslept. When he awoke, he was confronted with the fact that the sun had risen anyway. Eventually the cock realized that his crowing did not affect but merely witnessed the rising of the sun.

Often we pastors and theologians think that we have captured and are able to control the truth. But God is much greater than our perceptions—although he uses us, he is not dependent on us to make his glory known—just as the rising of the sun is not dependent on the cock's crowing. We merely witness to God's glory and to his great deeds, and this witnessing may not be the whole picture of the truth; it cannot capture the entire greatness of God.

This passage encourages us to let people of other faiths into our boat, to address our multifaith context on our journey in search for the truth, and not to look at the risks involved or to fear the unknown. It invites us to engage in dialogue with people of other faiths, and the outcome may just be that God will reveal himself to us in new, unexpected ways. After the disciples had experienced Jesus as being present in a situation which seemed strange and chaotic to them, they lost their fear and reached their destination immediately. May this be an encouragement to all of us to engage in dialogue with people of other faiths with the expectation of finding a part of the truth there; and may it help us to experience that God is greater than our perceptions and concepts of him.

Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

by Ted Zimmerman

On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshiped him. But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up; I am only a mortal." And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; and he said to them, "You yourselves know that it is lawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?"

Cornelius replied, "Four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me: He said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say."

(Acts 10:25-33)

We have heard earlier in this consultation from Dr Otávio Velho about an emerging worldview which takes seriously such things as dynamism and fluidity, variety and mixture. If I understand this view correctly, it is not something that is prescriptive, but rather is descriptive in nature. It is not that people are saying that things ought to become more dynamic and fluid, it is rather a new description of the world as a place which is characterized by dynamism, fluidity, mixture, and interaction. It amounts to a new sense of reality, a new worldview, which intends to describe the world more accurately.

Change itself is not new. The world has *always* been changing, although there have been different rates of change at different times. A number of other periods in history have been marked by rapid change. For example, in the year 1850, a United States senator officially proposed to close down the United States Patent Office, the place where new inventions are registered. The reason this senator gave was that there would no longer be any need for a Patent Office since every possible invention had already been made! That was in 1850! Just think of all the inventions made since then. It seems to me that the senator was trying to put some kind of cap upon the change happening around him. Change can be disturbing and difficult to handle, but it is not a new phenomenon.

From a theological perspective, I would like to suggest that viewing the world as characterized by fluidity and dynamism is something positive, something good. This view should, I believe, be embraced and investigated. It could be helpful and constructive in shaping the way the church proceeds.

Our particular time in history is not the *only* period of change, fluidity, and dynamism the church has seen. The church was born in just such a period. It emerged from just such a situation.

Acts 10:25-33 captures a moment in which the early church burst into new and uncharted territory. There, Peter is faced with a concrete situation that has led him beyond the boundaries of his previous experience. This text has always been interesting to me, and represents something of a nightmare; I often worry about being expected to say something without any preparation at all. Think how Peter must have felt when he was faced suddenly with the necessity to say something without knowing what he was supposed to say! Luke tells us that Peter rose to the occasion, realizing that he was being driven to find new ways of interacting with Gentiles.

The answer for Peter came in the midst of a fluid and dynamic, concrete life situation as a response to reality as he saw it. Our own situations are extremely varied, as we have been hearing from each other. Our situations are also fluid and dynamic.

This consultation is aimed towards equipping the church so that situations of fluidity may become situation of constructive, positive dynamism. This is very good. However, I doubt that we shall be able to prepare in advance for all eventualities. Our situations are so varied, fluid, and dynamic that we cannot nail them down; no single formula will do in all situations.

But we *can* remember Peter. The text of Acts 10:25-33 does not provide specific answers to all our questions today. It does remind us, however, that Peter was led by the Spirit to find new solutions. It was the Spirit who engineered the concrete situation in which Peter found himself, according to Luke. We can remember that the church has been led into uncharted territory before. Fluidity and dynamism have often characterized the history of the church and the working of the Holy Spirit.

Let us be open to being led again by the Spirit and by events into uncharted territory, knowing that this is not the first time the Spirit has done so. Let us seek to remain faithful to God who leads us to reach out beyond our boundaries to encounter other people and the world. We do not know the immediate outcome. There are serious risks involved, as Peter knew. Let us pray for God's guidance that we will be able to perceive, as Peter did, what God wants us to say and to do.

Amen.

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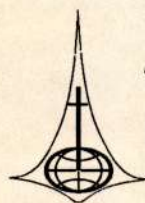
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